Beauty as the Beast: Constructions of the Girl in Three Modern Variants of the Tale as Old as Time

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Abstract

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This thesis aims to answer the following question: How is the girl constructed across three modern variants of "Beauty and the Beast?" The three primary texts examined in this paper are Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, Angela Carter's short story, *The Tiger's Bride*, and Salman Rushdie's novel, *Shame*. Each text was analyzed specifically for how it remains consistent with and deviates from Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast" published in 1756. My aim was to go beyond a sex-role theory analysis and assess how these modern variants revise a traditional plotline to construct the girl in terms of her agency, transformation, and fate. Emphasis was placed not only on comparing and contrasting the girl and the female experience across these three texts, but also on placing these texts within the context of gender studies and fairy tale scholarship at large.

A major premise of this thesis is that fairy tales are in an incredibly powerful position to inform, socialize, and re-socialize both children and adults. As a result, this project strives to elucidate what each of the three primary texts conveys about the fictional girl and about the actual girl represented by the fiction. Ultimately, this thesis demonstrates how the fairy tale influences our popular conception of gendered identities and how it can play a role in remedying longstanding and often harmful portrayals of these identities. It shows also how important this research is in today's social and political climate—where fundamental (if subconscious) misunderstandings of the woman have perpetuated the injustices she faces.

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We did it!

That I'd manage to glue together the slivers
of my shattered pride,
repair the tattered wings of my aborted flights,
and obtain my body's leave to bid you farewell—
I didn't know.
I had learned so little about myself.
Otherwise this ritual of saying goodbyes
could have ended long ago;
I could've found my courage earlier.
But who then had the time to meet herself?

—Parveen Shakir

The fairy tales we have now come to revere as classical are not ageless, universal, or beautiful in and of themselves, and they are not the best therapy in the world for children. They are historical prescriptions, internalized, potent, explosive, and we acknowledge the power they hold over our lives by mystifying them.

—Jack Zipes

Actors and writers and journalists and dishwashers and fruit pickers alike: they'd had enough. What had manifested as shame exploded into outrage. Fear became fury.

—Time*'s Stephanie Zacharek, Eliana Dockterman, and Haley Sweetland Edwards on the 2017 silence breakers*

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Preface: Beauties and Beasts in the Wake of #MeToo and Time's Up

It seems timely to talk about how the girl is constructed.

I chose this topic in what now feels like a different world, or the quiet before the storm. I began research before names like Harvey Weinstein, Kevin Spacey, Matt Lauer, Louis C.K., Al Franken, Dustin Hoffman, Roy Moore, Aziz Ansari, and many, many more shocked me, infuriated me, frustrated me, and broke my heart. After October 5th, 2017, when the floodgates opened and the hundreds upon hundreds of sexual assault accusations came pouring through, this project acquired a new vigor. Within a few short months, the #MeToo and Time's Up movements took off, and they showed us that there is a major disconnect between how we *think* we think about women and how we actually do. This disconnect is part of the reason that those we see in the news, and those we don't, insist that they "love and respect women" while their histories suggest otherwise. It is the reason one may declare oneself a feminist, and truly believe oneself to be, while failing to recognize the objectification of and violence toward women save in its most extreme forms.

But this project is not about America's recent sexual assault scandals—not directly, anyway.

This project is about lands far, far away, magical teapots, singing candelabras, beauties and beasts. It is true, of course, that even in such fantastic places, women have suffered at the hands of the patriarchal societies through which they were created. And in turn, fairy tale princesses and heroines reinforce the patriarchal contexts in which they were conceived. So why bother to write about the fairy tale? Why not let it and its historic misogyny fizzle out as a thing of the past?

There are a few answers to these questions. The first is that one would be hard-pressed to find a socializing tool quite like the fairy tale in terms of its lasting capacity and prevalence. The fairy tale isn't going anywhere. On the contrary, it has shaped those before us—and will continue to shape those after us—both as children and adults. The second answer ties into the first. Consciously or subconsciously, the woman has been and continues to be subjugated in our society. In the case of sexual assault, there is an apparent "for use" label on the female body that feminist scholarship has decried time and time again. And as we have seen, it is not solely the archetypal "bad man" who detects this label. This label is born of the myriad socializing forces in our society that, for centuries, have constructed our collective view of the woman as object, crazy, passive, fragile, gentle, wicked, and so on. These forces, however subtle, are powerful and warrant exploration. As I have mentioned, the fairy tale is one such force, and I am hardly the first to explore it.

Thirdly, as countless writers—particularly from the late twentieth-century onward—have demonstrated, the fairy tale has the capacity to be reclaimed. Reclaimed by female authorship, feminist criticism, and notably, a tale's female protagonist.

That is what this project is primarily concerned with: redemption. Realizing that constructions of the fairy tale heroine as object, crazy, passive, fragile, gentle, wicked, and so on, are unfair, damaging, and above all, incomplete. Realizing also that eliminating these stereotypes and re-characterizing the woman is not enough. *Her stories* must be told. And who better to tell a good story than the fairy tale?

Through this process, I explored how the woman is constructed in the fairy tale by deconstructing her and viewing her against the sociocultural contexts in which she was imagined and placed inside of. Looking at three variants of the "Beauty and the Beast" fairy tale, I

explored how their female protagonists were portrayed and what may be learned about or assumed of the girl from this. I believe if we really deconstruct the girl in this way, really look at how she was created and how she was conceived of, we learn not only of the incredible ability of fairy tales to inform and re-socialize, but also of its incredibly unique capacity to do just that.

Not long ago, Larry Lassar, a former physician for the U.S. gymnastics team, was confronted with more than 150 accusations that he had sexually assaulted women as minors. Before his trial, he had written a letter to the court criticizing the intentions of his accusers, accusing *them* of simply wanting media attention and money. In his letter, he included the sentence: "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned."

Naturally, my initial reaction to reading this was an amalgam of disappointment and disgust. The slighted woman as untrustworthy, angry, and hysterical. A beast. Isn't *that* a tale as old as time.

Later, as I was writing, I thought about Lassar's words and the beauties at the center of this paper. And I thought about all the women, over this past year and long before, who have been depicted as beastly while simultaneously being denied the power, voice, and even violence that we associate with beastliness. This paper is written in their image. It is written with the hope that, through the power of stories near and dear to us, things can change.

Introduction

Once upon a time, in the year 1998, not-yet Vice President Mike Pence published a review of Disney's *Mulan* on the website for his radio talk show, a portion of which is reproduced here:

> For those who have not yet been victimized by the McDonald's induced hysteria over this film, Mulan is a fictional account of a delicate girl of the same name who surreptitiously takes her father's place in the Chinese army in one of their ancient wars against the Huns. Despite her delicate features and voice, Disney expects us to believe that Mulan's ingenuity and courage were enough to carry her to military success on an equal basis with her cloddish cohorts. Obviously, this is Walt Disney's attempt to add childhood expectation to the cultural debate over the role of women in the military. I suspect that some mischievous liberal at Disney assumes that Mulan's story will cause a quiet change in the next generation's attitude about women in combat and they just might be right.[1]

We may debate, of course, Pence's claim that Disney's *Mulan* was written with the liberal mission of gender integration of the U.S. military in mind. His review nonetheless raises at least three important points with regard to the fairy tale as a cultural force. The first is that the fairy tale can have—and often has had—an important impact on popular discourse. The second is that Pence is correct in noting the "quiet change" in attitude that the fairy tale is capable of influencing; for centuries, the fairy tale has operated as a hugely pervasive socializing tool. The third point—and of particular importance to this paper—relates to the description Pence gives of the female heroine, Mulan.

Despite her delicate features and voice, Disney expects us to believe that Mulan's ingenuity and courage were enough to carry her to military success on an equal basis with her

[1] Andrew Kaczynski, "Mike Pence Argued In An Op-Ed That Disney's 'Mulan' Was Liberal Propaganda," Buzzfeed, July 17, 2016, https://www.buzzfeed.com/andrewkaczynski/mister-ill-make-a-man-out-of-you?utm_term=.qqDqjP9Vq#.wp4jW0e7j.

cloddish cohorts. In other words, despite her feminine qualities, Disney expects us to believe that Mulan's apparently superior attributes could earn her equal standing akin to her (foolish) male counterparts. Yes, Mulan is ingenious and courageous, but this isn't enough for her to be deemed as competent as rather incompetent male soldiers. It isn't enough, or, for whatever reason, it isn't quite *right*. The now-Vice President wasn't—and still isn't—alone in this perception. The staying power of the delicate-heroine image has remained so influential that it is conjured up even in the face of obvious counterexamples, such as the woman warrior, Mulan. And unfortunately, the image of the woman as delicate and subordinate in media such as the fairy tale has informed and influenced our image of the woman in real life. From this, we may be inclined to ask: What other images of the woman does the fairy tale put forth? And how does the woman's construction as "delicate," for example, come out of fairy tale discourses that go beyond simple gender role stereotypes? To answer these questions, a historical perspective of the fairy tale in terms of its influence and more recent feminist scholarship is necessary.

THE FAIRY TALE AS A CULTURAL AND SOCIALIZING FORCE

Identifying the birth of a fairy tale is often an impossible task, considering the fact that "fairy tales have been in existence as *oral folk tales* for thousands of years," constantly being revised and adapted to suit different cultural expectations and audiences.[2] Through these folk tales, storytellers offered "original and fantastic insights," uniting the common people with stories that reflected their frustrations, needs, and wishes.[3] Social problems were portrayed in a "narrative mode familiar to the listeners' experiences," and at the same time, offered hope for the

[2] Jack Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*. Rev. and expanded ed. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002), 2.
[3] Jack Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell*, 6.

future.[4] As Jack Zipes argues in his *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, "the fairy tale for children cannot be separated from the fairy tale for adults" as the oral tradition "was created and cultivated by adults," popularized in the literary tradition, and only then "disseminated in print in the eighteenth century to children."[5] Essentially, then, the oral folk tale occupied an important role in the lives of an intergenerational audience long before the tales were written down and mass-produced in a literary tradition that would more or less subsume its oral predecessor.

The literary tradition originated in 1697 with Charles Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (*Stories of Tales of Times Past*), a collection that "inaugurated the fairy tale as a literary form for children."[6] Here, the tales began to take on a socializing role, particularly for upper-class and *bourgeois* French children. Perrault, along with other writers, intentionally converted the oral folk tale "into a type of literary discourse about mores, values, and manners so that children would become civilized according to the social code of that time."[7] That is, over the course of the seventeenth century, children were increasingly regarded as a distinct age group, too innocent for some of the more explicit sexual discourses of stories for adults and in need of social shaping so that they could occupy desired roles in society. In keeping with these principles, the mid-eighteenth century birthed the distinct genre of children's literature.[8] Throughout the century and into the next, the genre's authors continued to censor their stories' content, as parents sought to "control [children] with punishments, gazes, words, pictures, and

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[4] Jack Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell*, 6.
[5] Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization* (London, United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), 3.
[6] Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), xvi.
[7] Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, 3.
[8] Elizabeth Marshall, "Stripping for the Wolf: Rethinking Representations of Gender in Children's Literature," *Reading Research Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (2004): 261.

whatever else could be added to the arsenal of parental weapons."[9] This censorship, of course, did not apply equally to young boys and girls. Rather, in order for society to continue to function properly, writers for children conspired "to bring about… the internalization of specific values and notions of gender."[10] According to Lilyane Mourey:

> …The heroines of [Perrault's] tales are very pretty, loyal, dedicated to their household chores, modest and docile and sometimes a little stupid insofar as it is true that stupidity is almost a quality in women for Perrault. Intelligence could be dangerous. In his mind as in that of many men (and women) beauty is an attribute of woman, just as intelligence is the attribute of man.[11]

It is important to note that Mourey's analysis does not suggest that gendered messages in fairy tales were simply implicit in the stereotypes presented of men and women. Rather, fairy tales often had an explicit cautionary moral, warning young girls in particular of the dangers that accompanied sexuality, curiosity, initiative, and intelligence among other characteristics. The Grimm Brothers were exceptionally rigorous in their revisions of oral tales, including in their stories an "elaborate set of signs and codes… that [were] the basis of benevolent patriarchal rule."[12] Disney, too (and especially), has been criticized for creating a non-reflective viewing experience, one in which characters are mere one-dimensional, gendered clichés lacking development.[13]

Noting this, scholars began to question how fairy tales ought to be addressed in the context of twentieth-century women's liberation movements. In 1970, Alison Lurie published the article "Fairy Tale Liberation" in the *New York Review of Books*, which "fueled feminist

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[9] Maria Tatar, *Off with Their Heads! Fairy Tales and the Culture of Childhood*, (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1992,) 90.
[10] Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, 9.
[11] Lilyane Mourey, *Introduction aux contes de Grimm et de Perrault*, (Paris: Minard, 1978), 40.
[12] Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, 69.
[13] Jack Zipes, "Breaking the Disney Spell," in *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995): 24.

scholarship on fairy tales."[14] In her article, Lurie argued that strong female characters existed in the classic fairy tales, although a male-dominated editing process had largely obscured their stories. She also pointed out that admirable female heroines could be found among a "larger and more representative corpus of lesser-known tales."[15] With this, Lurie concluded that the presence of multi-dimensional female heroines in fairy tales makes these tales "one of the few sorts of classic children's literature of which a radical feminist would approve."[16] In 1972, Marcia R. Lieberman refuted this claim, publishing her rebuttal in "'Someday My Prince Will Come': Female Acculturation Through the Fairy Tale." She argued:

> Only the best-known stories, those that everyone has read or heard, indeed, those that Disney has popularized, have affected the masses of children in our culture. Cinderella, the Sleeping Beauty, and Snow White are mythic figures who have replaced the old Greek and Norse gods, goddesses, and heroes for most children. The [folk tales]… to which Ms. Lurie refers… are so relatively unknown that they cannot be considered in a study of the meaning of fairy tales to women.[17]

The Lurie-Lieberman debate is widely regarded as the spark for much feminist fairy tale scholarship that ensued in the late twentieth century. Feminist criticism stemming from this debate was concerned, as Lurie and Lieberman were, with the portrayal of females in fairy tales and how these representations would affect young audiences.[18]

As Donald Hasse explains in "Feminist Fairy Tale Scholarship: A Critical Survey and Bibliography," the 1970s incited writers such as Andrea Dworkin, Susan Brownmiller, and Mary Daly to write what were somewhat oversimplifications of the fairy tale's role in advancing

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[14] Donald Hasse. "Feminist Fairy-Tale Scholarship: A Critical Survey and Bibliography," *Marvels & Tales* 14, no. 1 (2000): 15.
[15] Donald Hasse, "Feminist Fairy-Tale Scholarship," 15.
[16] Alison Lurie, "Fairy Tale Liberation," *New York Review of Books* (1970), 42-44.
[17] Marcia Liberman, "'Some Day My Prince Will Come': Female Acculturation Through the Fairy Tale," *College English 34*: 383-95. Rpt. in Zipes, *Don't Bet on the Prince* 185-200.
[18] Donald Hasse, "Feminist Fairy-Tale Scholarship," 16.

patriarchal models.[19] In 1979, however, Karen E. Rowe's *Feminism and Fairy Tales* offered a more nuanced perspective in explaining that fairy tales "no longer provide[d] mythic validations of desirable female behavior."[20] Rowe articulated that women now recognized that the romantic ideals of the tales were simply not reflective of real life. For the fairy tale to contribute to gender equality socially, it could be (and would need to be) reinvigorated, omitting these ideals. That same year, Madonna Kolbenschlag's *Kiss Sleeping Beauty Good-bye: Breaking the Spell of Feminine Myths and Models* asserted, too, that fairy tales had the potential to "awaken and liberate women."[21] To achieve such liberation, a diagnosis of where the problems lay and how they could be undone was necessary. Jack Zipes participated in this diagnosis in 1980 with *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*, which contributed a socio-historical methodology to feminist fairy tale scholarship for analyzing gender and socialization in the tales. Like Zipes, Heinz Rölleke, Ruth B. Bottigheimer, and Maria Tatar studied revisionism, conducting analyses of the Grimm Brothers' editorial processes and noting the specific ways in which the brothers promoted a patriarchal agenda through their characters and morals.[22] Others, like Marina Warner, sought to investigate the prevalence of the female voice in fairy tales. In her book *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers* (1994), Warner emphasized the significant role of female storytellers in the literary tradition. Angela Carter, similarly seeking to make the female voice heard, published *The Old Wives' Fairy Tale Book*

[19] Donald Hasse, "Feminist Fairy-Tale Scholarship," 18.
[20] Donald Hasse, ed. *Fairy Tales and Feminism: New Approaches*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 211.
[21] Donald Hasse, "Feminist Fairy-Tale Scholarship," 20.
[22] Donald Hasse, "Feminist Fairy-Tale Scholarship," 23-25. See Hasse's work for the specific distinctions between each of these author's contributions, what each contribution emphasized, and how these authors drew upon each other's work.

(1990), which "took pleasure in highlighting the heroine's multiple identities… that male editors had suppressed."[23]

These efforts constitute, of course, only a small sampling of the feminist fairy tale scholarship that arose in the late twentieth century. However, the different methodologies, perspectives, and intentions represented here portray how interdisciplinary and multifaceted attempts to examine fairy tales from a feminist perspective have been. These tales, historically influential for both children and adults, invite audiences to seek themselves in the stories and to find meaning they can apply to their own lives.[24] For centuries, their cultural weight has been enormous both for socializing the masses and even for fostering subversive discourses.[25] Still today, adults can point to the numerous and significant ways in which popularized fairy tales have shaped their identities and behaviors. These compelling stories are so rooted in our cultures that they undoubtedly possess the power to affect changes in conscious and subconscious attitudes, such as the one Pence so feared. We might therefore think of fairy tales as both mirrors and windows: mirrors in that they reflect prevailing ideologies of the time and windows into "how far we are from taking history into our own hands and creating more just societies."[26] Feminist fairy tale scholarship has, in large part, sought to demonstrate this. Rather than attempt to dismiss the fairy tale or somehow minimize its reach, critics have often sought to harness the cultural power of the tales and direct it toward those retellings that empower those traditionally disempowered. Three such retellings will be discussed in this paper, each in the "Beauty and the Beast" tradition.

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[23] Donald Hasse, "Feminist Fairy-Tale Scholarship," 22.
[24] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 3.
[25] For more detailed information on this, refer to chapter one of Jack Zipes' *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion.*
[26] Jack Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell*, 3.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

As Maria Tatar remarks in the introduction to her book *Beauty and the Beast: Classic Tales of Animal Brides and Grooms from Around the World*, Beauty and the Beast tales contain a "high coefficient of weirdness."[27] Folklorists classify "Beauty and the Beast" under the tale-type ATU 425: The Search for the Lost Husband, which mirrors the tale-type ATU 400: The Man on a Quest for His Lost Wife.[28] The "weirdness" of this search lies, in part, in the fact that the lost husband takes the form of a beast. It lies also in the fact that "Beauty and the Beast" has a "dark side," born out of "an emotional ferocity that encodes messages about how we manage social and cultural anxieties about romance, marriage, and 'the other.'"[29] Implicitly, the tale prepares young women for the anxieties they are likely to experience surrounding arranged marriages—when their fathers leave them in the residence of an unknown and intimidating male.[30] In spite of this "weirdness," Betsy Hearne, an expert on the "Beauty and the Beast" legend, argues that the tale's endurance through the centuries "proves it to be one of the great metaphors of oral and written tradition."[31] Animal bride and bridegroom stories such as "Cupid and Psyche" and "East of the Sun and West of the Moon"—to which "Beauty and the Beast" bears striking similarity—existed in oral and literary form long before "Beauty and the Beast" was published in the mid-eighteenth century. But neither, as Hearne asserts, has remained so widely popular as "Beauty and the Beast" has been and continues to be today. The incredible lasting power and popularity of this

[27] Maria Tatar, *Beauty and the Beast: Classic Tales About Animal Brides and Grooms from Around the World*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), ix.
[28] Maria Tatar, *Beauty and the Beast*, xv. One might note the gendered difference in the naming of these two tale types. As Tatar points out, the man is actively on a "quest" while the woman is not mentioned in her "search."
[29] Maria Tatar, *Beauty and the Beast*, ix.
[30] Maria Tatar, *Beauty and the Beast*, xiii.
[31] Betsy Hearne and Larry DeVries, *Beauty and the Beast: Visions and Revisions of an Old Tale*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 1.

tale as compared to other tales can perhaps be grounded in its "endless possibilities for aesthetic collisions, emotional conflict, and cognitive wobbles."[32] This is to say, the "genius" of "Beauty and the Beast" lies in its complex interpersonal dynamics and in the moral questions it raises surrounding family and personal sacrifice.[33]

It is important to acknowledge that the "Beauty and the Beast" tradition, with all its success, is fundamentally rooted in the efforts of women writers. While Charles Perrault is often credited with founding the fairy tale genre for children, it was really women "who founded the genre and played a more dynamic role in establishing the fairy tale to subvert more classical genres."[34] This can be seen clearly in the case of "Beauty and the Beast," which was first published in 1740 as "La Belle et la Bête" by Gabrielle-Suzanne de Villeneuve. In 1756, Jeanne Marie Leprince de Beaumont, an educated tutor and writer, condensed Villeneuve's 362-page story into a mere 17 pages, simplifying the story immensely and making it more popular among a larger audience. As such, Beaumont's story, which was later translated into English in *The Young Misses Magazine, Containing Dialogues between a Governess and Several Young Ladies of Quality, Her Scholars* overshadowed Villeneuve's and is typically referred to when speaking about the original literary publication of "Beauty and the Beast."[35]

Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast" begins with a family of seven—a very rich merchant, his three daughters, and his three sons. The youngest of his daughters is called Beauty for her appearance, and unlike her two older sisters, she is very kind and good-natured. Upon losing his fortune, the merchant and his family are required to move far away from their luxurious life in the city to the only property the merchant still retains—his country house. Beauty's two sour

[32] Maria Tatar, *Beauty and the Beast*, xiii.
[33] Maria Tatar, *Beauty and the Beast*, x.
[34] Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, 31.
[35] Betsy Hearne and Larry DeVries, *Beauty and the Beast*, 2.

sisters are very upset about having to move to the countryside whereas Beauty proclaims, "'My tears will not bring back my fortune. So I must try to be happy without it.'"[36] Arriving at the country house, Beauty tries to make the best of her situation, rising at four in the morning to undertake household chores and singing cheerily although she is unused to her new lifestyle. Meanwhile, her sisters sleep in until ten and chide Beauty's stupidity for settling for such dismal circumstances. One day, the merchant receives a letter that a shipment with his merchandise has arrived in the city; he hopes this will restore his fortune. His two older daughters beg him to bring them back "all sorts of finery" from his trip while Beauty wants nothing.[37] Not wanting to seem as though she thinks she is better than her sisters, however, Beauty asks for a rose.

The merchant embarks on his trip only to find there was some lawsuit regarding his merchandise; "he began his return journey poorer than before."[38] Caught in a snowstorm on his way home, the merchant comes across a palace where he hopes he can spend the night. Finding the house empty, he eats the food that is set out and gets a full night's rest, thanking the mysterious homeowner who must have set this up. On his way out, the merchant remembers Beauty and plucks a rose from a branch in the garden. Suddenly, the Beast appears and tells the merchant he will die for his mistake. When the merchant tries to explain, the Beast proclaims: "I'll pardon you on one condition, that one of your daughters comes here voluntarily to die in your place."[39] The merchant returns home and tells his children his story. His sons are determined to kill the Beast—the merchant says it is no use. Meanwhile, the older sisters berate Beauty for her arrogant request and for failing to shed a tear. But Beauty says she does not cry

[36] Jack Zipes, *Beauties, Beasts, and Enchantment: Classic French Fairy Tales*, (New York: Meridian, 1991), 234.
[37] Jack Zipes, *Beauties, Beasts and Enchantment*, 234.
[38] Jack Zipes, 235.
[39] Jack Zipes, 236.

because she is determined to take her father's place. Her father begs her not to, but "arguments with [Beauty] are in vain."[40] Upon Beauty's departure, her sisters rub their eyes with onions to feign despair. Leaving them behind, Beauty and her father head over to the Beast's castle where they spend the night together before the merchant must leave for home in the morning. During the night she spends with her father, Beauty dreams of a fairy who tells her that her good deed will not go unrewarded.

The rest of the story involves Beauty and the Beast engaging in conversation over dinner. The Beast tells Beauty that she is the mistress of the house and that her wish is his command. He is self-deprecating in their conversations and compliments her effusively. Soon, Beauty realizes there is nothing to be afraid of; the Beast has a good heart. Every night, however, the Beast asks Beauty if she will marry him. Eventually, she says:

> You are making me uncomfortable, Beast… I'd like to say that I'll marry you, but I'm too frank to allow you to believe that this could ever happen. I'll always be your friend. Try to be content with that.[41]

The Beast accepts this sadly but asks Beauty to promise she will never leave him. Beauty wishes she could, but she knows her father is sick, and she wants to see him. The Beast permits her to leave but confesses that he will die of grief upon her departure. With too much love for the Beast to allow him to die, Beauty promises to return back in a week's time. However, when Beauty arrives home, her cruel sisters take advantage of her kind and forgiving nature and trick her into staying longer than one week. Consequently, in her dreams one night, Beauty sees the Beast dying. She wakes up in tears, chastising herself for not realizing sooner that she must marry the Beast even if she does not love him, for "It is neither handsome looks nor intelligence that makes

[40] Jack Zipes, 237.
[41] Jack Zipes, 240.

a woman happy. It is good character, virtue, and kindness…"[42] When Beauty finds the Beast at his castle, the Beast tells her: "The grief I felt upon having lost you made me decide to fast to death."[43] Beauty responds that the torment she currently feels must be evidence that she does in fact love the Beast. With these words, the Beast is transformed into a handsome prince. The dream fairy arrives, making Beauty royalty and condemning her mean sisters to the life of statues outside the palace. With Beauty's father in delighted attendance, the story concludes,

> [The prince] married Beauty, who lived with him a long time in perfect happiness because their relationship was founded on virtue.[44]

Upon reading this tale, one may find it unsurprising that Beaumont preoccupied herself with moral and educational stories. Her "Beauty and the Beast" centers on valuing kindness above all else, seeing the beauty that lies within, and putting the needs of others above one's own. In addition to the underlying themes of the tale, a few characteristics of Beauty, the Beast, and the story's plot should be noted here, as they will be referenced throughout this paper. First, it is clear that Beauty's most salient qualities are her kindness, selflessness, virtuousness, honesty, agreeability, and adaptability. In addition to all this, she is forgiving and self-sacrificial—unbelievably and, at times, alarmingly so. In spite of her sisters' cruelty, for example, Beauty continues to forgive and love them, attempting to make their lives better in any way that she can. Moreover, after sacrificing herself in her father's place, Beauty sacrifices her own priorities again for the Beast, thinking herself "wicked" for having initially refused to give herself over to him. In these ways, Beaumont's moralistic wand is less than subtle. Her female protagonist, while admirable to some degree, lacks the flaws and self-concern of a real human being, making her an impossible standard to measure women against. Nonetheless, it must be

[42] Jack Zipes, 243.
[43] Jack Zipes, 244.
[44] Jack Zipes, 245.

acknowledged that “Beauty and the Beast” is a story, first and foremost, about Beauty. Whether or not the decisions she makes can be expected of any girl, she, at least, makes decisions. And, unlike the princesses of other classic fairy tales, she undergoes a journey of her own in which she is praised for possessing qualities other than passivity and beauty.

With regard to the Beast, it should be acknowledged that, for the most part, he is a non-threatening creature. Of course, he does threaten to eat Beauty’s father, and Beauty is frightened by his horrid appearance early on; however, it soon becomes clear that the Beast’s first priority is to accommodate Beauty’s requests. When Beauty asks him not to propose to her anymore, he is distraught, but he responds to her with respectful acquiescence. Moreover, important to the story is the fact that the Beast feigns unintelligence in Beauty’s presence, for the spell of his beastliness can only be broken if a woman can find his inner beauty in the absence of attraction or promise of intellect. This, of course, sends the message that virtuousness is more important than anything and that Beauty should recognize this as she makes her decision to put the Beast’s desires before her own.

Finally, specific instances within the story’s plot are worth mentioning. For example, Beauty’s father, while concerned for Beauty’s safety, ultimately allows her to sacrifice herself in his place to the Beast. The young daughter, blamed for her simple request for a rose, remains virtuous as long as she is willing to give her life for her father’s. Later on, Beauty must choose which of the two males in her life to care for: husband or suitor. Only after coming to terms with her duty to the future husband is Beauty rewarded with a happily-ever-after. Together, these plot points depict the societal expectations of a young, marriageable woman. She should be willing to take leave of her father, care for the husband, and overcome her anxieties surrounding the new life that awaits her. And she should do it, of course, without a word of complaint.

Having said this, "Beauty and the Beast" does have its share of strengths in depicting the woman, especially when compared to tales popularized by Perrault or the Grimm Brothers. Although the story locates the responsibility for Beast's life in Beauty's hands, upholding the patriarchal view that she should be the one making sacrifices, it also presents an arc of mutual maturation in which the female is an active participant in her fate rather than a sleeping victim (Sleeping Beauty) or the fortunate project of a fairy godmother (Cinderella). The complex relationship dynamics of this story, its origins in female authorship, and the presentation of female as active participant make "Beauty and the Beast" particularly suitable for analysis from a feminist perspective.

ANALYZING THE THREE MODERN VARIANTS OF DISNEY, CARTER, AND RUSHDIE

The story of "Beauty and the Beast" may be the tale as old as time, "but it is never the same old story."[45] Over the course of the past few centuries, many have crafted their own versions of Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast." While the nineteenth-century versions "are faithful to the narrative surface of the story," many of the twentieth-century versions "abandon narrative surface for an emphasis on internal themes."[46] The focus of this paper is to analyze three twentieth-century retellings of "Beauty and the Beast": Disney's animated classic *Beauty and the Beast,* Angela Carter's short story *The Tiger's Bride*, and Salman Rushdie's novel *Shame*. While Disney's and Carter's texts more directly draw upon Beaumont's story than does Rushdie's novel, each of the three retellings alters key plot points in Beaumont's version, producing, in effect, different images of the woman. Taken together, all three variants attest to

[45] Maria Tatar, *Beauty and the Beast*, ix.
[46] Betsy Hearne and Larry DeVries, *Beauty and the Beast*, 3.

the flexibility of the fairy tale to convey distinct messages concerning the woman and her position in society.

My purpose in conducting this literary analysis is to expand upon the work of fairy tale scholars who have sought to investigate the fairy tale's role in socializing gendered identities and influencing perceptions of the girl. Having established the fairy tale as an important socializing and cultural force, I am interested in studying texts that pride themselves on placing females at their centers. Using a combination of gender studies research and fairy tale scholarship, I evaluate each text not with the intention of categorizing it as "feminist" or "not feminist," but rather with the intention of exploring each text's strengths and weaknesses through a feminist lens. I also seek to expand upon the current body of feminist fairy tale scholarship by offering an analysis that goes beyond sex-role theory, which is primarily concerned with the different social roles occupied by men and women.[47] While a discussion of gender roles and their depiction in the fairy tale is certainly important and has been the focus of a considerable amount of fairy tale scholarship, I believe that sex-role theory is insufficient in discussing the construction of the girl insofar as the social roles she occupies (stereotypical or not) do not entirely define her. As important to the girl's construction is her story—the control she has over it, her development over time, and where she finds herself at its end. For this reason, I look at how plot revisions and characterizations of the woman operate in relation to the female's agency, transformation, and fate in each of the three "Beauty and the Beast" retellings. Is the girl's story really her own? Where is she awarded control and where is she denied it? If there are limitations on the female's agency, is this a purposeful commentary on her plight? In terms of female transformation, does the girl undergo any sort of internal growth? Does she transform in a way that is representative

[47] Elizabeth Marshall, *Stripping for the Wolf*, 256.

of her own aspirations? Does the story provide her with opportunities to move toward these aspirations, and if not, why? And what does the female's fate look like at the end of the story? Does she have a happily-ever-after and, if so, what constitutes it? How does her fate speak to her agency and transformation throughout the tale?

Overall, my analysis seeks to illuminate what questions of agency, transformation, and fate tell us about the treatment of the woman within the texts studied. Together, female agency, transformation, and fate offer insights into the more subtle messages sent through the fairy tale, allowing us, for example, to differentiate between the "active" female who is nonetheless awarded little agency or opportunity for transformation and the empowered female who has a command over her maturation and destiny. Ultimately, in comparing these texts to each other, I hope to answer questions regarding female liberation and to examine common themes across all three texts.

Before proceeding, it should be noted that my research consists of three variants that appeal to children and adults, individually and together. As discussed previously, the fairy tale has its roots in both adults' and children's lives, and therefore it is just as useful to analyze those stories enjoyed by children as those enjoyed by adults—and to think about, too, what makes certain stories more suited for children than adults and vice versa. I should also note that the three texts studied, wherever they take place, were originally written in English and are intended for a Western audience. As such, I find it appropriate to analyze each from a Western feminist lens.

I hope that through this analysis, we may get closer to the heart of the questions posed earlier: What images of the woman does the fairy tale put forth? And how does the woman's construction as "delicate," for example, come out of fairy tale discourses that go beyond simple

gender role stereotypes? In analyzing how the girl is constructed in these three variations of "Beauty and the Beast," we may even get a better idea of how to disrupt beliefs shared by those with Pence's understanding of the woman's role in society.

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Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*

In 1991, Disney released an animated classic that moved audiences of all ages, stunned the world with relatively new Character Generation (CG) animation, and won the hearts of Disney fanatics and skeptics alike.[48] Dominating the award scene, *Beauty and the Beast* became the first full-length animated feature ever to be nominated for a Best Picture Academy Award, winning the Oscar both for Best Music, Original Song and Best Music, Original Score. It also won the Golden Globe for Best Motion Picture, Best Original Song, and Best Original Score.[49] To this day, Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* maintains its position of #7 on the American Film Institute's Top Ten Animation Films list, ranking above all-time favorites such as Disney's *Cinderella* and *Finding Nemo* and just below *Toy Story*. Importantly, the film's musical and animated accomplishments, while impressive, were only one facet responsible for the classic's wide-ranging appeal. Attractive to critics and general audiences alike was the new Disney heroine's compelling brand of feminism. In an interview with *Time*, Linda Woolverton, *Beauty and the Beast*'s screenwriter and the first female to write a Disney animated film, explains that she was intent on creating a princess that wasn't "based on being kind and taking the hits but smiling all the way through it." She continues, "I just didn't feel like that's the message that we wanted to move into the next century with. And that's the Disney heroine that I grew up with."[50]

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[48] Ian Failes, "25 Years Ago: The CG Secrets of the Ballroom Sequence in 'Beauty and the Beast,'" Cartoon Brew, November 22, 2016, https://www.cartoonbrew.com/feature-film/25-years-ago-cg-secrets-ballroom-sequence-beauty-beast-145174.html.

[49] *Beauty and the Beast*, IMDB, Accessed April 23, 2018. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0101414/awards.

[50] Eliza Berman, "How *Beauty and the Beast*'s Screenwriter Shaped Disney's First Feminist Princess," Time, May 23, 2016, http://time.com/4344654/beauty-and-the-beast-linda-woolverton/.

Woolverton goes on to explain that creating the Belle that made it to the screen wasn't easy—many of her ideas were subject to rewrites or omission. Still, Belle appeared to be just what a new generation of Disney consumers was looking for. Said Hal Hinson of *The Washington Post*, "Disney's new full-length animated feature, *Beauty and the Beast*, is more than a return to classic form, it's a delightfully satisfying modern fable, a near masterpiece that draws on the sublime traditions of the past while remaining completely in sync with the sensibilities of its time."[51] Marina Warner of *Sight and Sound* commented:

> Liking a Disney film doesn't come easily… But this version of Beauty and the Beast is funny, touching and lively, and communicates romantic hopefulness with panache and high spirits. It's a true inheritor of a long literary tradition of romance, sieved through the consciousness of 70s feminism, which asked for plucky fairy-tale heroines and got this: a Hollywood belle who prefers books to hunks.[52]

All this suggests that Disney, long criticized for its representation of the girl, struck a new chord with *Beauty and the Beast*, breaking from a long tradition of harmful gender stereotypes to empower a young female audience.

In this chapter, I seek to investigate this notion, analyzing *Beauty and the Beast* with particular attention to when and how Belle controls her own fate in a patriarchal context, what her transformation looks like from the beginning of the film to the end, and what it means for her to live happily ever after with the prince given the transformation she undergoes. In this way, I look beyond how Belle breaks sex-role stereotypes and toward what can be learned about the girl through her story. I begin my analysis with a brief background on the Disney fairy tale in general and how Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* compares to Beaumont's literary tale in terms of major plot points. I then continue on to provide a reading of Belle's evolution through the film and how

[51] Hal Hinson. "'Beauty and the Beast.'" Washington Post. November 22, 1991. https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/movies/videos/beautyandthebeastghinson_a0a71b.htm
[52] Marina Warner, "Beauty & the Beasts," *Sight and Sound, 2, no. 6* (1992): 11.

this compares to the 2017 live-action remake, before concluding with the implications of Belle's happily-ever-after. Ultimately, in accentuating the contrast between Belle's explicit feminist ideals and subsequently limited opportunities for growth, I argue that Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, while initially promising, fails to push gendered boundaries beyond its opening scenes. The girl, while admirable, is required to settle within the traditional fairy tale plotline that favors her prince's development over her own. To understand the sort of taming of the girl that takes place, we must, of course, begin with our heroine's creators—Disney.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE DISNEY FAIRY TALE

There can be no denying the power and influence of the Disney fairy tale as a cultural force and socializing tool. Disney's signature "has obfuscated the names of Charles Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, and Carlo Collodi."[53] In 2007 the Disney Princess franchise, which includes *Beauty and the Beast*-themed items, reached $4 billion in global retail sales for products such as animated films, books, video games, clothing, school supplies, fast-food meals, and soundtrack CDs.[54] Even the self-professed Disney critic must admit that "it is impossible not to give [Disney] credit for revolutionizing the fairy tale through the technology of the cinema and book publishing industry."[55] In fact, many are surprised to find that the Disney

[53] Jack Zipes, "Breaking the Disney spell" 17.
[54] Chris Noon, "Iger's Disney Courts Princesses In Huge Campaign," October 3, 2005, https://www.forbes.com/2005/10/03/disney-princesses-dvds-cx_cn_1003autofacescan04.html#4a2f82a54bfd and Bob Iger, *Walt Disney Company annual meeting of shareholers 2006*, The Walt Disney Company, Retrieved April 10, 2018, from media.disney.go.com/investorrelations/presentations/060310_transcript.pdf.
[55] Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, 191.

fairy tales were adapted from a long tradition of oral tales that existed centuries before Disney Studios was born; for these audiences, "Disney is synonymous with the fairy tale."[56]

However, there exists a disconnect between Disney's overwhelming popularity and the way it is often spoken about in fairy tale and feminist scholarship. In particular, Disney is criticized for its treatment of the heroine in its tales. Zipes argues that Disney's "young women are like helpless ornaments in need of protection, and when it comes to the action of the film, they are omitted."[57] Of *The Little Mermaid*, Janet Wasko underscores that "the worlds represented… are patriarchies, in which society is dominated by men."[58] In her widely referenced article, *Things Walt Disney Never Told Us*, Kay Stone, too, decries the portrayal of passive heroines in Disney fairy tales—tales that strip women of any hint of aggression or sexuality and create instead heroines who are "passive and pretty, but also unusually patient, obedient, industrious, and quiet."[59] The breadth of Disney criticism is too great to be comprehensively represented here. Suffice it to say that Disney, overrepresented in the popular imagination's idea of the fairy tale, has not fared well with feminist critics.

This appeared to change with the release of *Beauty and the Beast* in 1991. Before assessing how exactly Disney managed to reach a feminist population with its Belle, it is important to briefly outline the ways through which the 1991 film altered Beaumont's original story. According to *TV Guide*, Jeffrey Katzenberg, Walt Disney Studios chair explained:

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[56] Kim Snowden and Jack Zipes, "Fairy Tale Film in the Classroom: Feminist Cultural Pedagogy, Angela Carter, and Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves*." In *Fairy Tale Films*, (University Press of Colorado, 2010), 161.
[57] Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, 203.
[58] Janet Wasko, *Understanding Disney: The Manufacture of Fantasy*. (Cambridge: Blackwell, 2001),136.
[59] Kay Stone, "Things Walt Disney Never Told Us." *The Journal of American Folklore* 88, no. 347 (1975): 44.

> The "problem" with the original storyline, the French court tale popularized by Madame Le Prince de Beaumont in 1757, was that "it's basically about two people who eat dinner together every night."… Hence [the Disney version's] talking teapot, rousing song-and-dance and "Home Alone"-style slapstick.[60]

Struggling to make *Beauty and the Beast* something that they thought audiences would find entertaining, Disney Studios ultimately attempted to revitalize both the plot and the story's female protagonist. Belle, a modern-day feminist, finds herself in an enchanted world of singing objects and enchanted roses absent in Beaumont's tale. The Beast, cursed for his selfishness and arrogance, has until his twenty-first birthday to find a woman who could love someone so ugly as the magic fairy has made him. Should he fail, he and his servants-made-objects are doomed to a subhuman life forever. In the following sections, I will analyze how these plot revisions shape Disney's heroine as compared to Beaumont's, beginning with Disney's creation of a pointedly active and intelligent female protagonist.

AN EMPOWERED FEMALE AT LAST!: SETTING THE STAGE WITH A NEW KIND OF DISNEY HEROINE

Explicit Feminist Ideals in Beauty and the Beast's *Opening Number*

> Now it's no wonder that her name means "beauty"
> Her looks have got no parallel
> But behind that fair façade
> I'm afraid she's rather odd
> Very different from the rest of us
> She's nothing like the rest of us
> Yes, different from the rest of us is Belle![61]

So goes the film's opening number, *Belle*, in which we are immediately made aware that Belle is no typical townsperson. In the upbeat, expository musical scene, we find the female

[60] Chris Hicks, "Beauty and the Beast," Review, Deseret News, November 22, 1991, http://www.desnews.com/movies/view/1,1257,154,00.html

[61] Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, dir. *Beauty and the Beast*. 1991; New York: Walt Disney Studios, 2016. DVD.

protagonist moving through a crowd of onlookers who comment on her strange nature, as she herself laments over her position within "this provincial life." Within the first five minutes of her appearance on screen, Belle is characterized as strange, dazed, distracted, funny (and not in a humorous way, mind you), peculiar, odd, different, beautiful, a puzzle. The stage is set. With her "nose stuck in a book," the townspeople simply cannot figure her out, and their attitudes toward her—as demonstrated by their words and facial expressions—suggest that they are far from happy about it. At once, we are directed to the image of Belle as Other in a town dominated by those who oppose deviance from sex-role stereotypes. Gone is the passive, weak, suppressed, powerless heroine of Disney's past; 1991 brings us a rejuvenated, headstrong female.

The very image of Belle appears to differentiate her among other females of Disney fairy tales. Upon the release of Disney's *Cinderella* in 1950, an anonymous reviewer featured in *Look* magazine characterized Cinderella "like most Disney heroines… 'the typical American girl.' She is cute, lively, of medium build, weighing about 120 pounds—and with a tender heart for boys and animals."[62] On the other hand, Belle is a thoroughly disillusioned brunette who would rather give her hand to a book than to the "brainless, boorish" man who pursues her. Unlike a princess, she is the daughter of a modest inventor. She sports a light blue dress with white apron, a symbol of her innocent goodness inspired by *The Wizard of Oz*'s female protagonist, Dorothy. Dorothy, too, is a courageous young woman who takes an active role in a journey filled with

[62] Anonymous, "Cinderella: The fairy princess comes gloriously to life in Walt Disney's newest feature-length film," *Look*, 31 (1950), p. 54. This source was retrieved from Amy M. Davis' article, "The 'dark prince' and dream women: Walt Disney and mid-twentieth century American feminism.

enchantment.[63] And so, while Belle certainly meets the standards of attractive and kind, she is hardly the tenderhearted blonde with a soft spot for boys.

Certain evidence of Belle's not being like the other girls is illustrated through the only other three young women with significant speaking roles in the movie—all thin blondes with identical faces, who fawn over Gaston's beauty and criticize Belle's blindness to it. One after the other, they regard Belle with an amalgam of incredulity and oblivion, exclaiming: "What's *wrong* with her?" "She's Crazy!" "He's gorgeous."

Viewed from the lens of sex-role theory, this portrayal of women in and of itself opens the door to criticism. Belle may be smart *and* beautiful, but she is an anomaly. There are two types of girls: Those like Belle (a population of one) and those on the opposite end of the spectrum (everyone else). The passive, superficial female indeed makes her way into the movie's exposition, highlighting the fact that Belle, rather than exceptional among strong, active women, is actually a one-of-a-kind in being intellectually inclined and unaffected by superficial, hyper-masculine charm. That is, rather than reinventing the on-screen woman, Disney presents Belle as unlike other women, who are fixated on the superficial.


Fig.1: Belle fawning over a good fairy tale, and **Fig. 2:** Other women fawning over Gaston[64]

[63] "Tale As Old As Time, The Making Of Beauty And The Beast (Extended Version)." Youtube. Accessed April 23, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=boFEksyRWAg.
[64] Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, dir. *Beauty and the Beast*. 1991; New York: Walt Disney Studios, 2016. DVD.

This aside, Belle embodies everything a feminist viewer might look for in a female role model. In the debut musical number, we learn that Belle is drawn toward books; she makes a sweet side-comment about a fairy tale, no less, that enthralls her. Perhaps most importantly, Belle has dreams of her own. She explicitly disavows the gender normative views her fellow townspeople adopt, singing in *Belle Reprise*:

> I want adventure in the great, wide somewhere
> I want it more than I can tell
> And for once it might be grand
> To have someone understand
> I want so much more than they've got planned.[65]

With this, we are informed in direct terms of whom Belle is and what she aspires to. In the first place, we learn that she intends to escape her current residence and to find some great, wide (and unknown) somewhere. Secondly, we learn that she wishes to find someone like her—from which we might assume she means someone who also seeks adventure. And finally, Belle wants much more than what the townspeople would have for her. That is, she wants more than marriage to a handsome young man who could provide her with a happy family.

As such, in the first few minutes of the film, we are introduced to what feminists may declare a triumph among Disney creations. Thus far, Belle has broken free of the status quo and defied a patriarchal system which would have her pursuing more "womanly" ideals. What's more, soon after her opening number, Belle's interactions with Gaston prove to us that she aspires to more than a simple-minded, hyper-masculine husband.

[65] Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, dir. *Beauty and the Beast*. DVD.

Rejection of a Beast: Threat and Violence in the Creation of Gaston as Antagonist and Belle as Woman

Many a moralizing, cautionary tale—Disney or not—has punished the girl for her curious, ambitious nature.[66] However, Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* appears to celebrate these qualities in Belle, representing—at least initially—those who stand in her way as foolish, cartoonish (even by a cartoon's standards), and repugnant. This is especially true in the case of Gaston, an evidently misogynistic narcissist who in the film's opening number makes his intention to marry Belle clear. Belle is portrayed as far too intelligent and too good for the likes of Gaston, who she refers to as "positively primeval," rejecting his advances and imagining in horror and disgust what it would be like to marry someone so utterly vapid and devoid of character as he. Exaggerating these qualities in Gaston, the film is able to effectively locate him as the story's antagonist—someone who will stand in the way of Belle and the Beast.

The musical number, *Gaston*, for example, is essentially devoted entirely to making a mockery of Gaston's obsessive and hegemonic masculinity.

> No one's slick as Gaston!
> No one's quick as Gaston!
> No one's neck's as incredibly thick as Gaston's!
> For there's no man in town half as manly
> Perfect, a pure paragon![67]

It is obvious to the audience that this number is simply an attempt to stroke Gaston's ego after Belle rejects him. The playful tune, Lefou's overeager praise ("Every guy here'd love to be you Gaston!"), and Gaston's participation in this ode to himself may elicit both audience laughs and exasperation. He makes ridiculous assertions ("And now that I'm grown I eat five dozen eggs, so

[66] See Zipes' *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, in which he discusses tales such as *Sleeping Beauty* and *Blue Beard* and the motives behind their cautionary morals.
[67] Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, dir. *Beauty and the Beast*. DVD.

I'm roughly the size of a barge") and applauds himself for activities that can serve no purpose other than to establish his unquestionable manhood ("I'm especially good at expectorating!). In this light and comic number, Disney asks us to scoff at such an insufferable suitor and to realize how incredibly ill-suited he would be for the self-possessed heroine, Belle. In fact, Gaston represents almost the exact opposite of what Belle stands for; he is unintelligent, superficial, mean, near-sighted, disrespectful, self-absorbed, and violent.

This violence is particularly worth noting. Part of what establishes Gaston as such a brute is his lack of regard for others. We soon find, on the other hand, that Belle is self-sacrificial and caring. While he may be attractive to the other women in the story, Gaston's excessively muscular physique establishes him as something of a beast, as he uses his strength to push around Lefou and break objects. More explicitly explained by singing bar-goers, the story's antagonist frequently attempts to intimidate others, and often, he succeeds.

Early in the story, we are introduced not only to Gaston's capacity to commit interpersonal violence in the case of nervous and smaller men, but also in the case of Belle. For example, when Gaston knocks at Belle's door to insist on her hand in marriage, the interaction between the two establishes a clear power dynamic—one that leaves Belle constantly dodging Gaston in an attempt to protect her person. (Note that in the following excerpt and all subsequent excerpts, my own observations are inserted as parentheticals.)

> BELLE: *(Groaning as she sees Gaston through the peephole. Backing up immediately after she answers the front door.)* Gaston! What a pleasant surprise.
> GASTON: *(Walking toward her as she backs away.)* Isn't it though? You know, Belle, there isn't a girl in town who wouldn't love to be in your shoes. This is the day… *(Grins in mirror, licks teeth clean, continues to corner Belle.)* This is the day your dreams come true.
> BELLE: *(Backing away.)* What do you know about my dreams Gaston?
> GASTON: Plenty! Here, picture this. *(Sits on chair. Smacks muddy feet onto Belle's book, which is resting on the table.)* A rustic hunting lodge… my latest kill roasting on the fire *(Kicks off shoes.)* My little wife massaging my feet *(Belle holds nose)* while the

little ones play on the floor with the dogs. We'll have six or seven.
BELLE: *(Smiling uncomfortably.)* Dogs?
GASTON: No, Belle! Strapping boys, like me.
BELLE: Imagine that *(Walking away with book)*.
GASTON: And do you know who that little wife will be?
BELLE: *(Making a face.)* Let me think.
GASTON: *(Corners her into wall, places hands on either side of her, against the wall. Says seriously.)* You, Belle.
BELLE: *(Immediately ducking under his arms and backing away, places chair between them.)* Gaston…I'm…I'm…speechless *(Fakes a smile, backed up against front door)*. I really don't know what to say…
GASTON: *(Places both hands on either side of her, against the wall, trapping her)* Say you'll marry me.
BELLE: I'm very sorry Gaston, but… *(Reaching for door)* but…*(Moving away from Gaston's attempt to kiss her)* I just don't deserve you! *(Opens front door, backing away in time for Gaston to fall through it.)*[68]

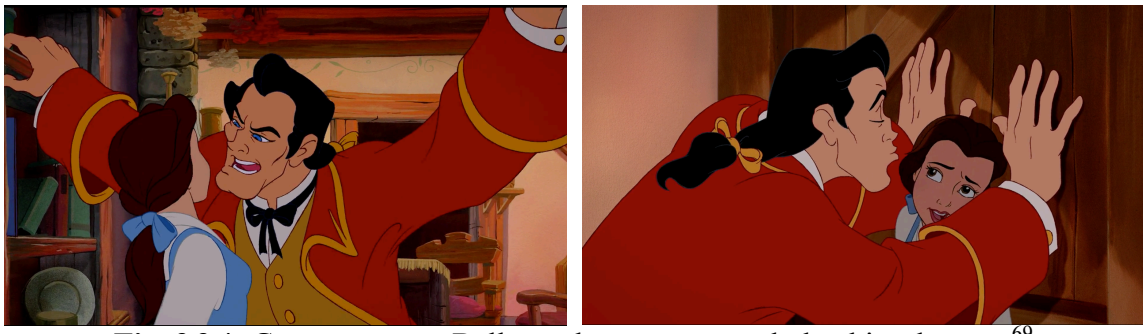

Fig. 3&4: Gaston corners Belle as she attempts to dodge his advances[69]

In this interaction, we are drawn to Belle's obvious distaste for Gaston, Gaston's inability to take a hint, and the utterly inappropriate manner through which Gaston asserts his entitlement to Belle. Earlier in the film, Gaston tells Lefou, "[Belle is] the most beautiful girl in town. That makes her the best. And don't I deserve the best?" Appearing at her house, Gaston has evidently come to collect on what he believes to be his right. Throughout the scene, we observe what Kathryn M. Olson terms "symbolic violence," which includes "representations of violence as well as threats short of blows, physical destruction of objects proximate to or cherished by the other, and containing the other through intimidation or implication that force will be used unless

[68] Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, dir. *Beauty and the Beast*. DVD.
[69] Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, dir. *Beauty and the Beast*. DVD.

there is compliance."[70] We note symbolic violence in Gaston's case, for example, when he plops his muddy shoes right upon Belle's book, something she cherishes deeply. A more explicit example is found in Gaston's cornering of Belle, trapping her between his arms, and insisting that she agree to marry him. The relentless man either does not notice or does not care about Belle's protests—likely both. And so Gaston is plainly established as reprehensible, beastly.

While the audience is expected to regard Gaston's movements and actions in this scene as entirely representative of his character, however, it is important to note that Belle's movements and actions are only partially representative of her character and more reflective of her gender. A significant aspect of her response speaks not only to her aversion to Gaston, but also to the social production of her body as female. As Ann J. Cahill argues, "The specifics of the feminine body, and particularly feminine bodily comportment, reflect the power relations which have produced them and the myriad ways in which this production was accomplished."[71] Belle, we find, is required to maneuver around Gaston's advances throughout the scene, and she is at once too polite and too scared to confront him outright. As he towers over her, she makes herself smaller, perhaps understanding that this serves her better than to confront the man whose dominating presence threatens her. We are, perhaps for the first time in the film, made acutely aware of how slight Belle's figure appears compared to Gaston's massive size. Her tentative and defensive motions, Cahill might argue, are a familiar and realistic portrayal of the vigilance a woman must command over her body at all times under the threat of sexual assault. One need hardly guess at the danger Belle may face should she let down her guard.

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[70] Kathryn M. Olson, "An Epideictic Dimension of Symbolic Violence in Disney's Beauty and the Beast: Inter-Generational Lessons in Romanticizing and Tolerating Intimate Partner Violence," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99, no. 4 (2013): 449.
[71] Ann J. Cahill, "Foucault, Rape, and the Construction of the Feminine Body," *Hypatia* 15, no. 1 (2000): 50.

The typical audience member will be made uncomfortable by these proceedings—and they are supposed to be, for we are meant to regard Gaston as the real beast. It is noteworthy, however, that this scene, for all its symbolic violence, isn't deemed too inappropriate for a child audience, even with the explicitly sexual advances. Perhaps the threat of sexual violence is part of the "surprising sexiness" that has been said to make *Beauty and the Beast* so entertaining for an intergenerational audience.[72] Or perhaps creators and audience members alike don't expect even the child to be fazed by such normalized harassment of women by privileged and powerful male figures.[73] In any case, through expository song and a short proposal scene, Disney quickly introduces us to the heroine of our tale and to the suitor who is her antithesis, a villain of sorts. An independent Beauty is in search of some way to achieve her own dreams, and a crude Gaston loses our sympathies in being crass, narcissistic, and a threat to Belle's ideals and even safety. As we will see, however, embodiment of these characteristics is not unique to Gaston.

A DUAL TRANSFORMATION: RECIPROCAL TAMING OF THE BEAST AND THE GIRL

Violence and Intimidation on the Part of the Beast

Belle's world is, of course, turned upside down when her father, picking a rose from the Beast's castle garden, brings misfortune upon himself. Accused of theft, Belle's father, Maurice, widely regarded as something of a laughingstock for his failed inventions, is suddenly in a grave situation as he is taken hostage by the Beast. Belle, finding out about the whole affair from their horse, Philippe, proves ever the good and loving daughter; she offers herself in her father's place against Maurice's will in a move that surprises even the Beast. Now behind bars, the girl is to

[72] See Olson's "An Epideictic Dimension" for an excellent discussion of *Beauty and the Beast*'s intergenerational appeal.
[73] Rick Marin, "Sexy Enough for Adults, Magical for Kids." *TV Guide*, (1991): 15.

remain within the castle as punishment for her father's crime. Oddly enough, this new situation foreshadows the potential for heterosexual love to evolve between the Beast and the girl—an opportunity to break the spell that keeps Beast a beast and his enchanted servants as objects.[74] An opportunity to become human again.

With Belle in the castle, one may notice a shift in the story from one that was originally Belle-centric to one that is dedicated to transforming the Beast back into a human before his twenty-first birthday. And in hardly any time at all, the audience finds itself rooting for what is supposed to be a Beast, stripping Belle of her agency to lead her own life. How does the film enable Beast to capture the audience's—and eventually Belle's—heart? Is it that, as Disney's enchantress tells us at the beginning, beauty lies within?

This is exactly where the story's plot contradicts Beaumont's s moral; beauty is not simply found within the beast. Belle puts it there. We must remember that Beast's internal beastliness is initially more appalling to Belle than his outward appearance, and only after several encounters between Beast and Belle is Belle able to discern any kindness at all beneath the beastliness. In Beaumont's version, the Beast may have been originally cursed for his arrogance, but throughout the story, he expresses nothing but kindness and civility toward beauty. We might assume that he learned his lesson about the importance of internal beauty long before he met the young woman who would break the curse. Beaumont's Beast is never rude, much less *violent* toward the heroine, and Beauty is never required to help him undergo any sort of internal transformation. In the Disney version, by contrast, Beast frightens Belle on several occasions, runs on all four legs when angry, and sports large teeth and a booming roar to

[74] In discussing gender, we may find it notable that the servants in this film were transformed into objects associated with each sex. The three women become a teapot, a dresser, and a duster. The men become a clock and a candelabra. The women are associated with domestic tasks or fashion while men are associated with industriousness.

intimidate her. He is arrogant, stubborn, angry, and impatient—even at the time he meets the story's Beauty. And, like Gaston, in his first real conversation with Belle, Beast uses the threat of violence to demand what he wants out of the heroine. Where Gaston's beastliness is to be expected, seeing as he is the story's antagonist, Beast's employment of violent tactics in regarding Belle should be more jarring, given that a love will blossom between Belle and Beast in spite of his violence toward her. This violence is first depicted in the scene in which Beast insists that Belle join him for dinner.

> COGSWORTH: *(Nervously.)* Good evening.
> BEAST: *(Through clenched teeth.)* Well, where is she?
> COSWORTH: Who? Oh *(laughing nervously.)* The girl, yes. The… girl. Well, actually, she's in the process of *(eyes go pale)*... uh, circumstances being what they are…*(Clearly distraught)* she's not coming.
> BEAST: *(Roaring)* WHAT?! *(Bursts through door.)*
> BEAST: *(Rapping on Belle's bedroom door, yelling.*) I thought I told you to come down to dinner!
> BELLE: *(From behind the door, defiantly.)* I'm not hungry.
> BEAST: You'll come out or I'll, I'll… I'll break down the door!
> LUMIERE: Master, I could be wrong, but that may not be the best way to win the girl's affections.
> COGSWORTH: *(Pleading.*) Please… *Attempt* to be a gentleman.
> BEAST: *(Angry.)* But she is being so *difficult*!
> MRS. POTTS: Gently, gently.
> BEAST: *(Reluctantly.)* Will you come down to dinner?
> BELLE: No!
> (BEAST looks at the OBJECTS, as if to say "see?".)
> COGSWORTH: *(Placating)* Suave. Genteel.
> BEAST: *(Restraining self.)* It would give me great pleasure if you would join me for dinner.
> COGSWORTH: Ahem, ahem, we say ''please.''
> BEAST: …Please.
> BELLE: *(Defiantly)* No, thank you.
> BEAST: *(Furious.)* You can't stay in there forever!
> BELLE: Yes I can!
> BEAST: Fine! Then go ahead and STARVE *(Roaring)*! (To OBJECTS) If she doesn't eat with me, then she doesn't eat at all![75]

[75] Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, dir. *Beauty and the Beast*. DVD.

Fig. 5: Beast threatening Belle in the presence of scared objects[76]

After this scene, Beast retreats angrily, and asks his magic mirror to show him the girl, who, he finds, is sobbing as the magic wardrobe consoles her. It becomes clear at this point that Beast feels some sort of remorse—an emotional experience most likely inserted with the intention of showing the audience that Beast does in fact have a heart. However, one might wonder what this scene would have looked like had Belle not locked the door to her bedroom. Even with distance between them, Belle is clearly distraught by Beast's symbolic violence, as he bangs on the door and threatens to allow her to starve. We might note also the significance of the Beast's attack on Belle's bedroom—a site of sexual activity and the only place of her own in the palace. If his words do not speak for themselves, Beast's actions here depict his ownership of the female body even in the woman's space of privacy. Still, in spite of a lack of evidence to suggest as much, the audience is encouraged to believe there is goodness in the Beast. This encouragement comes to us partly in the form of innocent anthropomorphized objects, who implore Beast to behave for their own sake.[77] Sympathy for the transformations of mere bystander castle servants into objects, and the hope that Belle can help save these poor bystanders through her love for the Beast, puts the audience on the side of the Beast, although it was the Beast's inner ugliness that

[76] Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, dir. *Beauty and the Beast*. DVD.
[77] For a more in-depth discussion of the concerning nature of the objects' support of this relationship and their normalization of it, see Olson's "The Epideictic Dimension."

transformed the servants into objects in the first place. Moreover, the romantic relationship between Belle and Beast earns audience support in part because of Beast's "mortal combat with and textual invitations to compare him to Belle's more violent suitor Gaston."[78] That is, however badly Beast may behave, the urgency of his situation—the hourglass rose whose death may seal his fate as Beast—and the relative repulsiveness of Gaston afford Beast the audience's affections. Notably, however, the differences between Beast and Gaston, especially early on, are minimal. The primary difference between the two characters is the film's treatment of the two—we are instructed to prefer one over the other, to excuse the Beast and to believe he has goodness that Belle simply has to reach, in spite of the violent threat he presents to her. Both relationships cause Belle considerable distress, but the film's attempts to support her romantic arc with Beast suggest that the good-hearted woman can and should persevere in the face of such distress to earn her happily ever after.

Significantly, the turning point in Belle and Beast's romantic arc is located just after the scene that most explicitly threatens Belle's person. After Belle defies Beast's orders and enters the west wing, she is met with his uncontrollable temper.

> BEAST: *(Facing Belle)* Why did you come here?
> BELLE: *(Clearly frightened)* I…I'm sorry.
> BEAST: I warned you never to COME HERE *(Grows bigger, spreads arms out intimidatingly)*.
> BELLE: *(Dodges behind piece of furniture)* I didn't mean any harm.
> BEAST: Do you realize WHAT YOU COULD HAVE DONE *(Breaks table with arm)*
> BELLE: *(Backs against dresser)* Please! Stop!
> BEAST: GET OUT.
> BELLE: *(Running away, frightened.)* No!
> BEAST: *(Breaks furniture and dresser* BELLE *has just moved from, roaring.)* GET! OUT![79]

[78] Kathryn M. Olson, "An Epideictic Dimension", 449.
[79] Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, dir. *Beauty and the Beast*. DVD.


Fig. 6: Belle cornered against dresser and **Fig. 7:** Beast preparing to smash this dresser moments later[80]

Here, a few observations may be made about the visual image of Beast's threat to Belle, her response to this threat, and the implications of her return to him thereafter. First, as the scene progresses, we find that Beast comes close enough to Belle to cause real harm to her person and that, once again, Belle is physically small in comparison to a male figure who could crush her. As her corners Belle, Beast grows bigger and bigger, and Belle, in turn, cowers away, becoming increasingly smaller. Second, unlike in the previous scene analyzed, in which Beast exhibits aggression that implies a threat to Belle, in the west wing scene, his explicit aggression and uncontrollable temper fall just short of causing actual harm to Belle. Beast smashes the dresser Belle is backed up against in the same breath as Belle runs from it. This scene—and the aforementioned scenes—capture the notion that "[the feminine body] constantly faces the possibility of threat, and only persistent vigilance can limit the risk at which it places the woman."[81] That is, Belle's body, by virtue of being female, is constantly at risk of being harmed. The fact that she let her guard down and was almost hurt is hardly out of the ordinary. Throughout the film, Belle's body is established as a site at which attack could easily occur. And the fact that two men who desire her constantly put her body at risk has the effect of producing

[80] Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, dir. *Beauty and the Beast*. DVD.
[81] Ann J. Cahill, "Foucault, Rape, and the Construction", 56.

the girl as object. Sadly, this may be why Belle's romance with the Beast still wins popular support; the violence she experiences is normal and therefore forgivable.

An Unexpected Step Back: Something That Wasn't There Before

Up until now, in spite of the violence she faces, Belle has remained remarkably grounded in her principles and beliefs. She will not be told what to do, nor will she be prohibited from satisfying her adventurous spirit in exploring the castle. While curiosity on the part of females has often been punished in the fairy tale, as it is in the Disney retelling of this tale, Belle, at least, is awarded the power to reject such treatment. For a moment, we are hopeful for her future at the story's turning point, when she exercises her free will to escape the castle, fleeing from the Beast who has only just threatened and frightened her.

But she doesn't get very far. Faced with a pack of threatening wolves, Belle may have found herself in a situation as dangerous as the one she just narrowly escaped with the Beast. However, before any harm can be done to her, Beast appears at the scene and fights off the wolves; for Belle's sake, he risks his own injury. Belle, struck by these events, and likely grateful to the Beast for having just saved her life, returns back to the castle to help tend to Beast's wounds.

Beast's courage and regard for Belle in this moment is considered redeeming—both for many audience members and for Belle. To the film's credit, in the scene following the wolf attack, Beast and Belle engage in conversation, which once again, affirms Belle's ability to hold her own against the stubborn Beast.

> BELLE: *(Holding out towel to dress the Beast's wounds)* Don't do that. (*Beast growls*, and OBJECTS back away frightened.) Just hold still.
> BEAST: (*Roars loudly*. OBJECTS *duck behind chair. In* BELLE*'s* face,) THAT HURTS!
> BELLE: (*Yelling at* BEAST.) If you'd hold still, it wouldn't hurt as much!

> BEAST: (*Temporarily taken aback.*) Well if you hadn't have run away, this wouldn't have happened. (*Smug.*)
> BELLE: (*Still defiant.)* If you hadn't frightened me, I wouldn't have run away!
> BEAST: (*Hesitates a moment.*) Well, *you* shouldn't have been in the west wing! (*Apparently satisfied with this reasoning.*)
> BELLE: (*Looks Beast directly in the face*) Well, *you* should learn to control your temper! (OBJECTS *slowly appear from behind chair.* BELLE *a little softer.)* Now hold still. This might sting a little. (BELLE *dabs wounds with wet towel.* BEAST *roars, away from her face this time.*) By the way, thank you for saving my life.
> BEAST: (*Hesitates a moment, caught off guard. Softens.*) You're welcome.[82]

It is true that this conversation presents Belle as fearless and unapologetic, something that surprises the enchanted objects. And indeed, the last image of the scene, of Belle tending to a subdued Beast before the fire, encapsulates a sweet moment of friendship between Belle and the Beast. This short interaction, however, appears to be all the peace Belle and Beast make with the violence Beast has shown toward Belle throughout the film and the resulting distress he has caused her. Indeed, this moment by the fire is a turning point in the story. Hereafter, Beast offers Belle his library, something that brings her great joy. The two spend time together, as Belle teaches Beast to read, and they grow increasingly fond of one another. From a sex-role theory perspective, this reversal of gender expectations deserves recognition. The female is educated—a reader—while the male is not.[83]

From this point onward, however, Belle's transformation is disappointing given her original aspirations. Originally the headstrong girl, looking for "adventure in the big, wide somewhere," Belle experiences her own sort of taming as she tames the Beast. Once the curious, rebellious young woman apparently trying to find her way out of the status quo, Belle eventually

[82] Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, dir. *Beauty and the Beast*. DVD.
[83] We might recall the in Beaumont's version, the Beast only pretends to be uneducated. It seems unlikely that a man born to nobility should be unable to read, and the creators of the 2017 live action version seemed to think so as well. In that version, the Beast is an avid reader, something that eliminates an unusual power dynamic between Beauty and Beast in terms of intellect but humanizes the Beast slightly more.

finds herself, at the hands of Disney, succumbing to the status quo nonetheless. While the traditional tale of "Beauty and the Beast" is one of mutual maturation, Disney's version favors the Beast's growth over Belle's. As Betsy Hearne comments, contrary to the French tradition of the tale, "Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* is full of chase scenes instead of the journeys between castle and home that characterized Beauty's earlier journey of maturation."[84] What's more, not only does Beast require Belle's love to break the spell, but he also learns from the Beauty how to improve his manners, behave kindly, treat others with respect, and even to read. Belle, on the other hand, supposedly learns, through her journey with the Beast, the importance of patience and perseverance in finding the goodness within others. If we recall, however, Belle sought neither to acquire patience nor a persevering attitude at the beginning of her story. In fact, she already possessed both, as shown through her patient optimism in the face of her father's failures and through her determination to find something more in the world. Nor was it implied even in her relationship with Beast that Belle was lacking in these two characteristics. If she refused the Beast, it was understandably because he had treated her with hostility, and she was still recovering from the loss of her father and her freedom. Often, the film is sympathetic towards Belle's stubbornness, as shown through the enchanted objects' desperation for Beast to change his behavior toward her (though they supported the love story even when it was doubtful that he would.)

In this way, it is clear that Beast undergoes a transformation that is pivotal to his character while Belle, earlier seeking her own kind of transformation, is coopted into helping Beast complete his. In the process, she, already good-hearted, proves to the audience her

[84] Betsy Hearne, "Disney revisited, or, Jiminy Cricket, It's musty down here!," *Horn Book Magazine* 73, no. 2 (1997): 137-146.

unsurprising capacity for caring. In the article, "Romancing the Plot: The Real Beast of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*", June Cummins astutely remarks:

> Belle is adventurous and brave, as her determination to find her father and her proposal that she take his place as a prisoner both demonstrate. Yet in these actions, Belle's desire for adventure gets lost first in her need to take care of her father and second in her growing affection for the Beast… In spite of Belle's aspirations to educate herself, the film locates her real value in her capacity to nurture.[85]

Given this turn in Belle's storyline, it is perhaps unsurprising that in 1991, Don Hahn, who produced *Beauty and the Beast*, admits that "contrary to tradition… this had to be the Beast's story… The Beast was the guy with the problem."[86] And so in an unfortunate turn of events, Belle, the Disney heroine that defied all the gendered stereotypes, has as much to show for it at the end of her story as did most Disney princesses of her time.

Still, one might argue, the film was advertised as a love story. Indeed, Beaumont's traditional tale, too, lends itself in part to the romance that develops between Beauty and Beast. Viewers might find themselves disappointed that Belle's story was not her own, but could we have expected differently? And is there really any harm in creating a Belle who finds, at the very least, the inner strength to help others heal?

A look at Beaumont's version of the tale would suggest that, yes, we could indeed have expected differently from the Disney film in terms of female transformation. Although the original literary tale certainly alludes to the transformative power of love, significant revisions in the Disney version send an alarming, if unintentional, message about womanhood, responsibility, and abuse. As already established, in Beaumont's version of the tale, "the Beast's metamorphosis is only one aspect of a multifaceted story, and Beauty's character development is at issue as

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[85] June Cummins, "Romancing the Plot: The Real Beast of Disney's Beauty and the Beast," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1995): 25.
[86] David Ansen, et al, "Just the Way Walt Made 'Em," *Newsweek* 18 (1991): 74-80.

much as the Beast's."[87] The Disney version includes, however, additional elements such as Beast's uncontrollable temper and the urgency of Beast's situation as symbolized by the falling rose petals. Both of these elements make it such that Belle not only sacrifices her own aspirations, but is also forced to face the challenge of Beast's anxiety regarding his fate and the violence that results from this. Belle is tested time and again, and eventually, in accepting the Beast and learning to overlook his faults for his more endearing characteristics, she is applauded. Ultimately, "the spell that is upon the Beast is broken 'by the love of a good woman.'"[88] The film sends the message that if only a "good woman" can look hard enough, and persevere just enough—even in violent situations—she can bring out the good in others and bring happiness upon herself. Taken a step further, not only *can* she bring out the good in others, but she *must*, for we know what fate would have befallen the Beast and those poor enchanted objects should Belle have more selfishly chosen to simply walk away. The responsibility to transform the Beast puts Belle in harm's way, but this does not mean she should give up or place her protection before Beast's growth. Rather, she just has to try harder, love harder.

The film, of course, does not address the problematic nature of this logic. Instead, it presents the love that blossoms between Belle and the Beast as a matter of newfound awareness. Belle and Beast simply misunderstood each other before; perhaps they simply were not paying attention. In the number, *Something There*, Belle sings:

> There's something sweet, and almost kind
> But he was mean and he was coarse and unrefined
> And now he's dear, and so unsure
> I wonder why I didn't see it there before.

[87] June Cummins, "Romancing the Plot", 24.
[88] Elizabeth Dodson Gray, "Beauty and the Beast: A Parable for Our Time," *Women Respond to the Men's Movement: A Feminist Collection*, ed. Kay Leigh Hagan (San Francisco: Pandora, 1992), 160.

New and a bit alarming
Who'd have ever thought that this could be?
True that he's no Prince Charming
But there's something in him that I simply didn't see.[89]

Never mind the idea that perhaps Belle "didn't see it there before" because Beast was more preoccupied threatening to withhold her meals, banging on her door, bringing her to tears, and driving her from the castle. In fact, this pattern of abuse, forgiveness, and return is something that Olson relates to cycles of intimate partner violence. She writes:

> The violence that Beast enacts toward Belle in Disney's film bristles with the primary expressive aggression and coercive control behaviors characterizing real-life relationships with repeated intimate partner violence: (a) controlling behavior; quick to anger; wants to know the partner's whereabouts at all times; angry if the partner is late; (b) quick involvement in the relationship; ''I've never felt loved like this by anyone!'' (c) isolation; the abuser may cut the partner off from friends, family, and resources; (d) blaming others for the violent partner's feelings or angry actions; (e) breaking or striking objects when angry, which may prefigure personal violence; (f) overt threats of violence.[90]

In spite of this, Belle and Beast's union "signals an opportunity for the lover to reform the violent [male] with the result that the efforts end in happily-ever-after love," implying that the Beast can be placated with the help of a devoted woman.

THE 2017 LIVE ACTION REMAKE

Almost thirty years later, Disney brought back its wildly successful story in a live action remake starring a widely regarded advocate for women, Emma Watson, as Belle. As shown by an overwhelming response to the film's release, the decades that distanced the remake from the original animation could not make an enthusiastic audience forget the magical story that had

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[89] Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, dir. *Beauty and the Beast*. DVD.
[90] Kathryn M. Olson draws upon this source to make these claims in her "The Epideictic Dimension": "Marquette County - Domestic Violence." Accessed April 23, 2018. http://www.co.marquette.mi.us/departments/prosecutor_s_office/domestic_violence.php#.Wt5MdNPwab8.

stolen their hearts in 1991. Grossing over $1.2 billion worldwide, *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) set a number of records, including (but certainly not limited to) "Biggest Day at the Domestic Box Office for Remake Movies," "Biggest Weekend at the Domestic Box Office for Musical Movies," and "Biggest Weekend at the Domestic Box Office for Walt Disney Movies."[91] Still today, it holds these titles. Nominated for two Academy Awards (in art and costume design), Bill Condon's remake made headlines, initiating a new era of live-action remakes of Disney animated classics.[92] Said Jeff Bock, an analyst at Exhibitor Relations, "I don't know if they made a deal with the devil, but Disney is an awfully potent empire right now. You continue to shake your head and roll your eyes, but they can do nothing wrong right now, and that has all the other studios salivating."[93]

Apprehensive viewers were encouraged not to worry: the new live action remake "offers a faithful yet fresh retelling that honors its beloved source material [the 1991 Disney animation]."[94] In her review entitled "Beauty (and Brains and Bravery) and the Beast," Alexandra Macaaron raves that "Emma Watson's Belle is smart, progressive, and 'not a princess.'"[95] Anthony Lane of the *New Yorker* remarked, "only the sternest viewer will be able to

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[91] *Beauty and the Beast - Financial Information*. The Numbers. Accessed March 28, 2018. https://www.the-numbers.com/movie/international-iframe/Beauty-and-the-Beast-(2017).
[92] "Beauty and the Beast (2017)." Box Office Mojo. Accessed April 23, 2018. http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=beautyandthebeast2017.htm.
[93] Brent Lang. "Box Office: 'Beauty and the Beast' Smashes Records With Towering $170 Million Debut," *Variety* (blog), March 19, 2017. http://variety.com/2017/film/box-office/beauty-and-the-beast-box-office-1202011662/.
[94] "Beauty and the Beast (2017)." Rotten Tomatoes. Accessed March 28, 2018. https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/beauty_and_the_beast_2017/.
[95] Alexandra Macaaron, "'Beauty (and Brains and Bravery) and the Beast.'" Women's Voices For Change. March 21, 2017. https://womensvoicesforchange.org/movie-review-beauty-and-brains-and-bravery-and-the-beast.htm.

resist the onslaught of such thoroughly marketed magic."[96] Audra McDonald, who plays the remake's Madame Garderobe, the enchanted dresser, assured viewers, "That [the original Disney] film is absolutely perfect and no one denies that; Disney isn't trying to get rid of that—they're just exploring."[97]

From this, one might gather that much of the appeal of the new Disney film lay in its resemblance to its animated inspiration. That, in keeping with the themes, motifs, and overall plotline of the original Disney story, the new film was a success. Of course, Disney did adjust the film in subtle but notable ways to make it more palatable to a 2017 audience. Overall, however, much of the remake remains the same—and, I argue, too much the same—as the original, in spite of the shift in gender attitudes our society has experienced from the early 90s to the present. Examining how and where the remake departs from and remains consistent with the 1991 Disney version can provide valuable insights into what Disney deemed appropriate to include for a present-day audience. It may also reveal how Disney's revisions of its own tale communicate Disney's—and our own—changing or static perceptions of the woman.

Consistency in Belle's Explicitly Feminist Ideals and Divergence in Degrees of Violence

Initially, the live-action remake of *Beauty and the Beast* attempts to assert a sort of heightened progressiveness in drawing upon something already present in the 1991 Disney film—Belle's defiance of sex-role stereotypes. Although much of the original soundtrack and dialogue remains in the remake, a few additional lines further drive home Belle's representation

[96] Anthony Lane. "'Beauty and the Beast' and 'T2 Trainspotting' Reviews." *The New Yorker*, March 17, 2017. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/03/27/beauty-and-the-beast-and-t2-trainspotting.
[97] "The Mouse House Banks Big on Some Real-Life Renovations." Press Reader. March 17, 2017. https://www.pressreader.com/canada/starmetro-calgary/20170317/281878708187194

as a self-possessed woman. In this new version, for example, Belle teaches a little girl to read, much to the townspeople's dismay. Says a school's headmaster, "What on Earth are you doing? Teaching another girl to read? Isn't one enough?"[98] With this, we are made aware not only that Belle embodies feminist ideals in and of herself, but also that she believes other women should be afforded greater opportunities as well, indicating that 2017-Belle is an even more active participant in initiating change in her surroundings than 1991-Belle. Moreover, Belle is made more assertive in the live action remake, as depicted through the scene—explored previously in the 1991 version—in which Gaston proposes to Belle.

> GASTON: Belle! *(Approaching the fence outside Belle's residence.*) I heard you had trouble with the headmaster. He never liked me either. (BELLE*, on the other side of the fence, clearly uncomfortable, walks quickly away without saying a word.*) Can I give you a little advice about the villages though? They're never going to trust the kind of change you're trying to bring.
> BELLE: All I wanted was to teach a child to read.
> GASTON: The only children you should concern yourself with are (*Gesturing to himself first and then to* BELLE)…your own!
> BELLE: (*Annoyed and a bit disgusted.*) I'm… (GASTON *moves to block her way*) not ready to have children. (BELLE *enters another gate to her residence and closes it behind her*.)
> GASTON: *(Addressing her from the other side of the* gate*.)* Maybe you haven't met the right man!
> BELLE: It's a small village Gaston. I've met them all. *(Locks gate.*)
> GASTON: Well (*Reaches over gate to unlock it, follows her)*, maybe you should take another look! Some of us have changed.
> BELLE: Gaston! We could never make each other happy. No one can change…that much.
> GASTON: Oh Belle. Do you know what happens to spinsters in this village after their fathers die? (*Motions to begging ladies*.) They beg for scraps, like poor Agathe! This is our world, Belle! For simple folk like us, it doesn't get any better. (*Pulls himself closer to* BELLE *by the bottom of her dress*.)
> BELLE: I might be a farm girl *(Pulls dress away)*, but I'm not simple, and (*Begins to close door behind her*) I'm never going to marry you, Gaston! I'm sorry![99]

We find numerous differences in the remake's versions of Belle and Gaston. In the first place,

[98] Bill Condon, dir. *Beauty and the Beast*. 2017. London: Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 2017. DVD.
[99] Bill Condon, *Beauty and the Beast*, DVD.

Belle is far more explicit in her rejection of Gaston, as depicted by her visible irritation and her frank refusal to engage him. Rather than allowing Gaston to make her uncomfortable, Belle makes a show of closing herself off to him, rejecting his advances not simply by ducking away, but by speaking to him face-to-face. She stands up for herself and asserts her intelligence when Gaston indirectly questions it, closing the door in his face rather than finding a lucky moment to escape his kiss, as in the 1991 version. Gaston, moreover, while still clearly wrong for Belle, is identified as the antagonist more so for his foolishness than for his violence. We are more inclined to laugh at this new Gaston and less inclined to cringe—an important revision. Even the dress-pulling establishes Gaston as annoying and childish more so than violent.

Fig. 8: Belle teaches young girl to read and **Fig. 9:** Belle visibly irritated with Gaston[100]

Having established a significant decrease in the violent threat presented by Gaston, let us now examine the Beast. Finding that Belle has not joined him for dinner, the Beast retreats angrily first to the enchanted objects. After the objects convince him that charming Belle with kindness at dinner may be an opportunity to break the spell, Beast reluctantly finds himself at the young woman's door. Half-heartedly, he knocks on the door loudly and tells her—in tones of reluctance rather than anger—to join him for dinner. Belle does not hear him, as she is busy tying clothes together to form a rope that will help her escape through the window of the castle—another moment portraying the woman as active participant. Beast makes a second attempt:

[100] Bill Condon, *Beauty and the Beast*, DVD.

> BEAST: (*Trying to sound charming.*) Will you join me for dinner? (*Waits, anxiously.*)
> BELLE: (*Angry.*) You've taken me as your prisoner and now you want to have dinner with me? Are you insane?
> PLUMETTE: Uh oh, he's losing it.
> COGSWORTH: Oh dear.
> BEAST: (*Banging at door now, furious*.) I TOLD YOU TO JOIN ME FOR DINNER!
> BELLE: And I told you, no! […] I'd starve before I ever ate with you!
> BEAST: Well, BE MY GUEST! GO AHEAD AND STARVE! If she doesn't eat with me, she doesn't eat at all.[101]

Revisions here include the fact that Beast does not initially threaten Belle with symbolic violence—although, eventually, he does. At that point, however, Disney attempts to disguise this violence with the fact that 2017-Belle bites back harder than the distraught Belle of 1991. This does not eliminate the violence, however. Rather, it makes the violence less obvious and perhaps more digestible, considering Belle is not as apparently affected by the Beast's threats in the newer version. In the west wing scene, too, the symbolic violence perpetrated by Beast is masked by Belle's less intimidated response:

> BEAST: (*Appearing suddenly from somewhere unknown, lands in front of* BELLE *with a bang*.) WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO IT?
> BELLE: (*Taken aback.*) Nothing.
> BEAST: Do you realize what you could have done? YOU COULD HAVE DAMNED US ALL. (*Gets closer to* BELLE's face, *looms over her.*) GET OUT OF HERE. (BELLE *starts running*.) GO![102]

Although Belle does not scream and cower in the 2017 version as she did in the 1991 version, Beast threatens her again in the 2017 west wing scene. Notably, however, Beast does not break anything with the destructive anger he possesses in the 1991 version. The revisions made to the tale with regard to Beast's violence seem to imply that the producers understood something to be not quite right in the 1991 version. To remedy this, however, they unfortunately place once more the responsibility on Belle to be courageous while Beast remains angry, out of line, and utterly

[101] Bill Condon, *Beauty and the Beast*, DVD.
[102] Bill Condon, *Beauty and the Beast*, DVD.

frightening. And so, while 1991-Gaston's ways may have been too overtly dangerous to maintain in 2017, 1991-Beast's actions appear not to have been. Perhaps this is because 1991-Gaston's threats were perceived as sexual in nature—a particularly sensitive topic in 2017—whereas 1991-Beast's violence was perceived as less gendered. Taking Cahill's argument, however, Beast's threat to Belle is inherently sexual, as "assaults, including those made with fists, and especially those which occur within the context of sexual relationships, may in fact be experienced as sexual in nature."[103] The female body—socially produced as a site of attack—can hardly be dissociated from the "femaleness" of the body, which makes it so.

A Brief Note Regarding the Incorporation of a Mother Figure

While revisions to the violence and the overall plotline of the 1991 *Beauty and the Beast* film may have been insufficient, the 2017 *Beauty and the Beast* tale does incorporate something that has been largely absent from traditional fairy tales: mothers. Often, "the good mother dies at the beginning of the story." In her place, "figures of female evil stride through the best-loved, classic fairy tales."[104] Of the mother's absence in our cultural imaginary, Lynda Haas writes:

> This point is easily illustrated by the representations (and lack of representations) of mothers and daughters in Disney films (and in most films); the typical mother is absent, generously good, powerfully evil, or a silent other, a mirror that confirms the child's identity without interference from hers. In this way, mothers are either sentimentalized or disdained…[105]

Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* remake, recognizing this, includes the quest for the mother as something important, if not central, to Belle's story. Belle's search for information on her mother—who and how she was—is something absent not only from the 1991 Disney film but

[103] Ann J. Cahill, "Foucault, Rape, and the Construction", 61.
[104] Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde*, 201.
[105] Lynda Haas, "Eighty-six the mother", in *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995): 87.

also from Beaumont's tale. The live action remake restores from Beaumont's tale the dialogue in which Belle *asks* her father for a rose, adding the notion that Belle wants this rose because it reminds her of a rose her mother holds in a painting. In this way, the search for her mother contributes to Belle's transformation, contributing to her maturation process and eliminating the idea of the mother merely as figurehead. Although not living, the mother continues to influence her child's growth.

Later, 2017-Belle and the Beast use the magic mirror to find out what caused Belle's mother's death, finding that she had fallen sick from the plague. In an interview with *Hollywood Reporter*, Bill Condon, the film's director, explains this decision, stating, "They're both outsiders, but how did Belle wind up being so different from everybody else in a town where nobody understands her, and how did the Beast become the person who earned that curse?"[106] Condon continues on to explain that one aim of the remake was to fill in the blanks. Although the mother figure may have been added more for consistency's sake than for the sake of empowering Belle, putting a face to the mother has a significant effect on the tale. Unlike the 1991 version, Belle now *does*, in some way, undergo her own process of transformation and maturation. Her adventures include more than the struggle for freedom or the love plot with the Beast. Belle is able to find solace of her own, and at least in this case, the Beast helps her rather than the other way around.

[106] Gregg Kilday, "'Beauty and the Beast' Director Bill Condon on Bringing Musicals Back." Hollywood Reporter. March 2, 2017. https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/beauty-beast-director-bill-condon-bringing-musicals-back-981418.

Fig. 10: Belle's mother kissing a toy rose upon her husband's and daughter's departure[107]

Unfortunately, this plot addition, which is given only around ten minutes of screen time, cannot on its own redeem the preference given to Beast's story through Disney's overall adherence to the 1991 story line. The implications of this general adherence and of the few areas in which Disney's 2017 remake does indeed diverge from the 1991 version will be explored in the next section.

HAPPILY EVER AFTER A RETURN TO TRADITION

At the beginning of both of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* movies, we see a stained glass window with the words "vincit qui se vincit": "he conquers who conquers himself." Oddly enough, in both films, it is not he who conquers himself, but rather she who enables him to conquer. That is, while Beast does play a role in his own transformation, Belle is largely the vehicle by which he is able to achieve this transformation. Risking violence to her person and sacrificing her own personal ambitions, Belle's agency comes into question. While constructed as an active participant throughout her journey, Belle is captured by the Beast, denied her freedom, and responsible for bringing out the good in him. She is granted agency throughout the film in several small though significant ways; however, overall, the film presents obstacle after obstacle to a girl who attempts to escape an undesirable situation. In the end, there was little she

[107] Bill Condon, *Beauty and the Beast*, DVD.

could do to fight the fate the Disney adaptations had set out for her.

The 1991 Disney version, in adding a sense of urgency to Beaumont's plotline, was certainly able to intensify the story, drawing in a massive audience and a devoted fan base. In the process, however, it missed an opportunity to portray female maturation in an authentic way. Belle's explicit feminism at the beginning of her story may count for something, but for the most part, it draws attention to the fact that much of the feminist ideals in Disney's revisions have to be said out loud. In the film's more subtle facets—in images of the woman and interpersonal dynamics, for example—the female is done an injustice. And it is one that almost thirty years of social change apparently could not remedy in the remake.

Neither of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* films end in a wedding. However, Chip, the young teacup turned boy, asks his mother at the movie's end: "Are they gonna live happily ever after, Mama?" To which his mother replies, "Of course, my dear." With this, it seems that "happily ever after," if not quite Beaumont's ideal of marriage, remains defined as the union of man and woman, love prevailing in spite of threats of violence the woman faces, and the transformation of the story about a woman into a story of her supporting role.

In this way, Disney's traditional fairy tale inserts and advertises the female's dreams and considers this an end in itself. Neglecting to pay any mind to the fulfillment of these dreams, Disney's depiction of Belle's transformation is disheartening. Not one to stray far from tradition, the studio created a female face representative of ideals its fan base could be proud of without departing from the conservative norms that had allowed the company to master the fairy tale game in the first place. As recently as 2017, Disney has continued to hold fast to these norms—regardless of the impact.

-II-

Angela Carter's *The Tiger's Bride*

"Beauty's happiness is founded on her abstract quality of virtue": the moral of the story "is all to do with something indefinable, not with 'doing well,' but with 'being good."[108] So writes Angela Carter, English novelist, short story author, and journalist best known for retelling fairy tales from a feminist perspective. In 1979, Carter published a collection of short stories entitled *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, offering "savage analyses of patriarchy of the 1960s and 1970s…[and providing] an exuberant re-writing of… fairy-tales that actively [engage] the reader in a feminist deconstruction."[109] Among these stories is *The Tiger's Bride*. In it, Carter revises key aspects of Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast," offering a more critical view of the social circumstances that shape the female protagonist's fate and agency.

Told from the first-person perspective of a woman whom we might call Beauty (though, seeing as she refers to herself as "I", we never learn her given name), readers are immediately thrust into a darker reality than the one created by Beaumont or Disney. While, in effect, the result of the father's misstep with the Beast is the same across all three versions, Carter's story locates the blame for this misstep in the father's own deficiencies rather than in Beauty's request for a rose. Carter's story begins with the furious, cynical, and somewhat jaded attitude of a woman highly attuned to the notion of her body as object.

"My father lost me to The Beast at cards."[110]

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[108] Angela Carter, Michael Foreman, and Charles Perrault, *Sleeping Beauty and Other Favourite Fairy Tales*, (London: Gollancz, 1991): 128.
[109] Merja Makinen, "Angela Carter's the Bloody Chamber and the Decolonization of Feminine Sexuality," *Feminist Review* 42 (1992): 3.
[110] Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2015): 62.

The story's plot proceeds as follows: Beauty and her father, attempting to escape Russia's bitter cold and what we may assume to be the father's gambling addiction, find themselves in some "remote, provincial place" in Italy.[111] The story's Beauty had chosen this place herself because "oh irony, it boasted no casino."[112] Her "limping Italian" prevented her from realizing, however, that everyone who arrives in this "melancholy, introspective region" must play a hand with the "*grand seigneur*," *La Bestia*.[113]

The Beast, robed, masked, and scented to hide his beastliness, arrives at the visitors' residence to collect on this requirement. Carter's Beauty watches as, game after game, her father forfeits her once-lofty inheritance in what, she remarks sardonically, must be some "passion to donate all to the Beast."[114] Finally, having lost everything, Beauty's father has nothing left to offer—"except the girl."[115] Departing from Beaumont's tale, in which Beauty must willingly offer to take her father's place as the Beast's prisoner, Carter's Beauty is needlessly sacrificed, much to her disbelief, and ultimately lost to the Beast.

Arriving at the "vast man-trap, the megalomaniac citadel of his palazzo", Beauty is led to the Beast's room to hear his proposition. The enchanted valet translates the master's growls for Beauty's understanding: "My master's sole desire is to see the pretty young lady unclothed nude without her dress" after which she will be returned to her father along with all his lost fortunes.[116] Beauty laughs in the Beast's face; the Beast sheds a tear. Beauty counters that, instead, she will lift her skirt up to her waist with a sheet over her face and the lights off. The

[111] Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*, 62.
[112] Carter, 62.
[113] Carter, 62-63.
[114] Carter, 62.
[115] Carter, 64.
[116] Carter, 70.

Beast is now invited to accept or refuse *her* offer. She is sent back to her room. After refusing the Beast's request once more, Beauty is asked to accompany the Beast to go riding.

Riding horses out to "the bank of a river that was so wide we could not see across it," the Beast requires Beauty to look at him, for the first time, in his unconcealed form.[117] Moved by his vulnerability, Beauty offers, of her own accord, to disrobe before the Beast as well, feeling "at liberty for the first time in [her] life."[118] Returning to the castle, the Beast grants Beauty her freedom. Instead of leaving, however, Beauty decides to send back to her father a mechanical doll that resembles her—the doll assigned to be her servant within the castle. Then, in her room, she disrobes, dons a fur coat, and heads to the Beast's room. Beauty invites a frightened Beast toward her, whereupon he purrs, causing the castle to fall down around them. The story ends with Beast licking Beauty's hand, removing her skin and leaving in its place "a nascent patina of shining hairs."[119]

Carter's story revises Beaumont's plot to include themes largely absent from the traditional fairy tale and the Disney version. Carter's Beauty, for example, is forced to navigate a series of events in which her body is explicitly regarded as property, staked easily during something as trivial as a game of cards. Unlike Beaumont's story, which frames Beauty's journey as beneficial for her moral development, or Disney's story, in which Belle's imprisonment elicits hope and optimism in the Beast, household objects, and viewers, Carter's revision plainly portrays the disquieting power dynamics inherent in Beauty and the Beast tales. Still, Carter does not victimize her female protagonist. Instead, Beauty seizes an opportunity to learn more about herself in a world isolated from the one that has wronged her throughout her

[117] Carter, 76.
[118] Carter, 78.
[119] Carter, 81.

life. In order to understand how Beauty is ultimately able to shed a skin that was never hers to begin with, an analysis of how the female voice and the story's disruption of the Beast/girl binary contribute to the girl's transformation must take place.

THE UN-SILENCED FEMALE ON THE NATURE OF WOMANHOOD

Many are familiar with Charles Perrault's *Sleeping Beauty*, in which we encounter a princess who is almost immediately made silent, left in a deep, innocent slumber as those around her fight to determine her fate. We remember also Hans Christen Anderson's beloved story, *The Little Mermaid*, which features a young woman who must literally offer her voice in exchange for the freedom she seeks. Both tales speak to a widespread theme among traditional fairy tales: the silenced woman. In her book *Fairy Tales and Society*, Ruth B. Bottigheimer seeks to quantify observations regarding the female voice in seven of the Grimm's tales. Providing a gendered breakdown based on character roles, she notes that the word "speak" is used in relation to a mother figure three times, a girl seven times, a father/king eleven times, and with a boy/prince sixteen times.[120] That is, fathers and kings are almost four times as likely to be associated with a speaking opportunity as is a mother figure. Similarly, a young boy is more than twice as likely to be granted a voice than is a girl. This is perhaps unsurprising given that kings, fathers, and boys in classic fairy tales are more likely to be associated with authority than are mothers and girls. More intriguing is the fact that some women are in fact granted more speaking opportunities than even the most authoritative of males: a witch is associated with the word "speak" nineteen times across the seven tales studied. Unfortunately, this observation produces and arises from the notion that "the more loquacious a (female) character…the more likely she is to be up to no

[120] Ruth B. Bottigheimer, "Silenced Women in the Grimms' Tales: The 'Fit' Between Fairy Tales and Society in Their Historical Context." In *Fairy Tales and Society: Illusion, Allusion, and Paradigm*. (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986): 126.

good."[121] By contrast, righteous women are often innocently mute in the Grimms' *Fairy Tales*, and if they must speak, they "answer with great frequency, they almost never pose a question, and their general helplessness leads them to cry out often."[122]

Turning to the French tradition, we might be pleased to find that "Beauty and the Beast" departs from this trend of keeping morally upright women quiet and making malevolent women talkative. A voice is indeed awarded to Beauty, who is considered a gem among women for her kindness, honesty, and selflessness. It is notable, however, that in Beaumont's tale, Beauty is granted a voice for a specific purpose—to socialize the female reader into good behavior. Rather than depend on implicit messages about good women keeping quiet and bad women speaking up, "Beauty and the Beast" allows Beauty to tell readers more specifically about the ways a woman can go wrong. Beauty vocalizes her shortcomings, repents for her selfishness, and demonstrates what she should be willing to sacrifice to be a "good girl." For example, after using her voice repeatedly (though politely) to reject the Beast's marriage proposals, Beaumont's Beauty scolds herself for having felt at liberty to do so. She awakens from a nightmare in which she finds the Beast dead and exclaims:

> Aren't I very wicked for causing grief to a Beast who has gone out of his way to please me? … Why haven't I wanted to marry him? … It's clear that I don't love him, but I have respect, friendship, and gratitude for him…and if I'm ungrateful, I'll reproach myself for the rest of my life.[123]

Beauty's voice here explains that a woman can be wicked for causing grief, for being ungrateful, and for refusing good men. Similarly, upon finding Beast to be near dead in the magic mirror, Disney's Belle cries, "This is all my fault!" Such comments illustrate that Beauty uses her voice

[121] Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde*, 395.
[122] Ruth B. Bottigheimer, "Silenced Women", 127.
[123] Jack Zipes, *Beauties, Beasts, and Enchantment*, 243.

to morally check herself—to point out in which situations young girls should acknowledge their wrongdoings.

In contrast, Carter's *The Tiger's Bride* is notable for telling the story from the female's first-person perspective, one that simply serves to express the woman's feelings rather than to instruct a female audience about the "right" thing to do. Throughout the story, Carter's Beauty conveys her horror over being treated as property as she is passed from the hands of her father into the hands of the Beast, and she ruminates on how this event has caused her to evaluate her worth as a woman. In this way, Beauty's perspective elucidates her female experience, allowing readers to relate her life's events to the way in which she copes with and responds to her new circumstances.

From the outset, Beauty's perspective makes us aware of her status as the dispensable woman. In place of the self-sacrificial girl who accepts her father's impending doom as her fault, we find a Beauty victimized (and appalled) by the foolishness of her father's vices. As her father "deals the Devil's picture books," Beauty watches "with the furious cynicism peculiar to women whom circumstances force mutely to witness folly."[124] Beauty comments here on the relationship between her father's detrimental actions and her own unwilling silence. This silence, far from making Beauty confused, ignorant, or indifferent, only highlights the injustice of the situation, given Beauty's superior foresight and inferior treatment. In placing the blame for her fate on her father, Carter's Beauty converts Beaumont's subtext of the devalued woman into explicit text. That is, in Beaumont's tale, Beauty's father, returning home with Beauty's roses, says, "Beauty take these roses. They will cost your poor father dearly."[125] Beauty then insists that she should take her father's place in the Beast's castle since she asked for the roses, and finding it useless to

[124] Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*, 61.
[125] Jack Zipes, *Beauties, Beasts and Enchantment*, 237.

argue with her, her father relents. However distraught he may be, Beauty's father trades his daughter to the Beast for his own life under the pretext that she, in some way, deserves it. Meanwhile, Carter's tale removes the blame that is attributed to the woman for asking for a rose, exposing plainly a concept central to the Beauty and the Beast tradition: the woman is an object, a prize to be won. While the Beaumont and Disney versions are able to portray Beauty's self-sacrificial tendencies as female agency, Carter makes clear that "Beauty's heroism [in traditional tales] bears the marks of collusion with the patriarchal system, developing along the lines of submission…"[126] Carter's version reminds us that Beauty's imprisonment in the Beast's castle is not simply the product of an obedient daughter's love for her father—her imprisonment symbolizes the patriarchal system that commodifies her.

Beauty continues to muse on the nature of womanhood as she is forced to accept the repercussions of her father's bargain. She explains, "My father said he loved me yet he staked his daughter on a hand of cards…You must not think [he] valued me at less than a king's ransom, but at *no more* than a king's ransom."[127] Recalling "old wives' tales" and "nursery fears" of tiger men and bear children that were used to scare her into obedience as "a wild wee thing," Beauty realizes on her way to the Beast's castle that these tales were premonitions of the dangerous experience of womanhood. And she suspects that violation of her body lies in store for her. She comments, "…My own skin was my sole capital in the world and today I would make my first investment."[128] Later, Beauty elaborates on the notion of her body as her "sole capital," noting that "as a young girl, a virgin," men have denied her the intelligence and rationality that they

[126] Cristina Bacchilega, ed. "In the Eye of the Beholder: 'Where is Beast?;'" In *Postmodern Fairy Tales*, *Gender and Narrative Strategies*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997): 77-78
[127] Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*, 63.
[128] Carter, 68.

grant other men, "in all their unreason."[129] She realizes, in fact, that she is hardly any different from the magical doll-servant that the Beast has given her.

> I certainly meditated on the nature of my own state, how I had been bought and sold, passed from hand to hand. That clockwork girl who powdered my cheeks for me; had I not been allotted only the same kind of *imitative* life among men that the doll-maker had given to her? (Emphasis is mine.)

Beauty understands that female deviance from an imitative life is commonly found to be dangerous. In fact, leading this imitative life is necessary if Beauty is to convince others that she has been successful in suppressing what many consider to be an inherent quality of the woman: beastliness. At one point, she finds herself relating to the Beast that imprisons her, considering the view that "not beasts nor women were equipped with… [souls] when the good Lord opened the gates of Eden and let Eve and her familiars tumble out."[130] Beauty's awareness of the beastliness others have condemned her to creates a critical perspective on the traditional reading of this tale.

And so, from her own perspective, Carter's Beauty is able to articulate experiences common both to Beaumont's Beauty and even to Disney's Belle. All three beauties are clearly worth something to someone, though perhaps not worth *enough*. All three face threats to their bodies. All three are underestimated or deemed irrational—whether for their self-sacrificial tendencies, their generosity, or their dreams. While Carter's Beauty's fate is familiar in that it is determined by the patriarchal system in which she finds herself, her ability to tell her own story, and to criticize those in it—unrestricted by the frankly absurd and self-defeating virtuousness of Beaumont's and Disney's Beauties—lends her a degree of agency nonexistent in the other two versions.

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[129] Carter, 76.
[130] Carter, 76.

FEMALE TRANSFORMATION IN DISRUPTING THE BEAST/GIRL BINARY

As explored in my discussion of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, Beaumont's tale is often praised for its attention both to the Beast's transformation and to Beauty's. However, while Beaumont certainly communicates the idea that Beauty has grown in her ability to put others first, to see that beauty lies within, and to keep her promises, she also communicates the notion that a woman must obey a man's wishes—even if it isn't in her best interest to do so. Disney's tale reiterates this in its Belle; there is a sort of taming that takes place, with equal regard to the Beast and to the girl. Only through this taming can the Beast be subdued not only in the story's literal Beast, but in the coming-of-age woman. The woman's inherent beastliness—curiosity, intelligence, self-concern, desire—has the capacity to ruin a carefully constructed, gender-normative society. She must learn to quench it.

Carter's Beauty undergoes a maturation process in which the Beast's decision to yield something to *her* is the spark for her own transformation. Through this transformation, Beauty refuses to concede to still more demands on her body (the stipulation that she remove her clothes in exchange for freedom), and, in the end, she realizes that the life she was forced to leave behind was perhaps more of a prison than her new one. In ten pages, Carter's Beauty explores desire and sexuality, finds strength in her relationship with the Beast, and reflects on the liberation she has found. At the same time, however, the story's Beauty is not ignorant of the injustice in her circumstances and the problematic framework in which she finds herself.

To assess such a transformation, it is appropriate to begin first with Carter's Beauty's refusal of the Beast's initial request. Upon arriving at the castle, the enchanted valet—the Beast's translator—explains to Beauty, with "a good deal of embarrassment," that the Beast's sole request is that she should disrobe for him but one time, after which she will be permitted to

return home with all her father's riches restored.[131] Here, a familiar power dynamic is established. The Beast, Beauty's captor, conditions her freedom on the sacrifice of her bodily autonomy. Unlike in Beaumont's tale, Carter's Beast does not ask for Beauty's hand in marriage; however, Beauty must decide between her freedom and the concealment of her virgin body. It is noteworthy that pre-marital modesty is sometimes (though not always) required of a woman in order for her to be marriageable. Given the patriarchal society Carter's Beauty describes belonging to early in the story, we might expect this connection between the "purity" of the female body and the woman's eligibility for marriage to hold true in Beauty's world. That is, the request to see the woman's naked body, though not the same as a marriage proposal, may preclude the woman from being eligible to marry another.[132] In this way, Beast's request to view Beauty's body may still be interpreted as a way for him to claim her as his. Less familiar than this power dynamic, however, is the response of both Beauty and the Beast upon hearing this request voiced. Beauty, whose "eyes were level with those inside the mask" throughout this proposition "could scarcely believe [her] ears".[133] As Christina Bacchilega explains, "Rape is the beastly act everything [Beauty] knows has prepared her for," but that the Beast should expect her to willfully comply to her own objectification is ridiculous.[134] Carter's Beauty, upon hearing the Beast's proposal, lets out a laugh—and an unladylike one at that.[135]

Already, the binary established between Disney's Beauty and Beast—in terms of the woman as vulnerable and the man as commanding—begins to break down. In *The Tiger's Bride*,

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[131] Carter, 70.
[132] Alice Schlegel, "Status, Property, and the Value on Virginity," *American Ethnologist* 18, no. 4 (1991): 719
[133] Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*, 70.
[134] Cristina Bacchilega, "In the Eye of the Beholder," 98.
[135] Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*, 70-73.

the Beast's eyes evade Beauty's, "as if, to his credit, he was ashamed of his own request."[136] Here, we see something human in the Beast, and he appears to understand why his request cannot be fulfilled, like Beaumont's Beast when he asks for Beauty's hand and unlike Disney's Beast when he asks Belle to dinner. But Carter's Beauty is not fazed by the Beast's despair. She does not feel regret nor guilt for having rejected the Beast. Instead, she is capable of doing what is typically characteristic of the Beast: taking command, deciding the terms of her freedom, and expecting—or at least hoping—that the shame of the other will set her free. Beauty proposes her own condition for freedom:

> I will pull up my skirt to my waist, ready for you. But there must be a sheet over my face, to hide it; though the sheet must be laid over me so lightly that it will not choke me. So I shall be covered completely from the waist upwards, and no lights. There you can visit me once, sir, and only once…If you wish to give me money, then I should be pleased to receive it…However, if you choose not to give me a present, then that is your right.[137]

We might note that in Beaumont's and Disney's stories, the Beast must grant Beauty permission to leave the castle whereas Carter's Beauty refuses to follow the rules; instead, she makes her own. Struck to the heart, as Carter's Beauty describes it, the Beast sheds a tear in response to Beauty's refusal and the coolness of her counterproposal. Carter does away with the idea that the woman should lack anything that resembles beastliness and that the man must be invulnerable. Beauty can be assertive and the Beast can cry. The woman is not always considerate and caring (and is not expected to be) and even a Beast can experience shame. In this way, *The Tiger's Bride* challenges the binary and generates audience sympathy for two three-dimensional characters.

[136] Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*, 70.
[137] Carter, 71.

Later, Beast repeats his request: to see "'the sight of a young lady's skin that no man has seen before.'"[138] Again, Beauty rejects this "humiliating bargain," refusing to take off her clothes for the Beast "like a ballet girl."[139] Realizing Beauty will not be the first to concede, the Beast does something that contributes immensely to Beauty's transformation. In a "place of perfect privacy", the Beast insists that if Beauty will not allow him to see her without her clothes, she must brace herself for the Beast's nudity. On "the brink of panic", Beauty "did not think that [she] could bear the sight of him."[140] But, the valet tells her, she must. And so she does. Upon seeing the "annihilating vehemence of his eyes, like twin suns", Beauty reports: "I felt my breast ripped apart as if I suffered a marvelous wound."[141] But it is not pain that Beauty experiences; the wound destroys some unwanted, restricted part of her that she carried over from her old life in her father's world. In its place, something else is born: a kind of enlightenment. Carter's Beauty understands: "The tiger will never lie down with the lamb; he acknowledges no pact that is not reciprocal."[142] In an effort to earn her trust, the Beast found the courage to disrobe before Beauty, in spite of the clear shame he experiences over his appearance and the pains he takes to hide his beastliness. The vulnerability he allows himself to experience sets something off within Beauty. She understands that the Beast intends to do her no harm, and, in an effort to "run with the tiger," she unfastens her jacket to show him that she, too, would "do him no harm."[143] Here, Carter makes explicit the notion that Beauty could in fact hurt the Beast; however, Beauty is not blamed for this fact. Where Beaumont's Beauty appears to have a responsibility not to take advantage of the power she holds over the Beast, as it could kill him, Carter's Beauty feels no

[138] Carter, 73.
[139] Carter, 73.
[140] Carter, 77.
[141] Carter, 77.
[142] Carter, 77.
[143] Carter, 77.

shame for holding power and therefore will not forfeit it. In fact, upon exposing her body to the Beast, Beauty only becomes more powerful, feeling "at liberty for the first time in her life."[144] Through this experience, the Beast "brings [Beauty] to a clear seeing of herself—or at least, a clear seeing of her desire to better 'see,' to know, herself."[145]

While this incident sets the groundwork for Beauty's transformation, her decision to stay with the Beast after she is granted her freedom completes it. The experience of looking at the Beast and of being looked at by the Beast causes Carter's Beauty to realize how often she is unseen in the world, how "eyes that watch you take no account of your existence."[146] Beauty, it appears, wants to leave her former life behind along with the role she once occupied in it. This desire leads her to embrace a new skin and to shed the current one all together. To shed this skin, Beauty sheds her clothes, which serve as an under pelt of sorts. She releases the Beast within her, as it is "not natural for humankind to go naked" and she is not demonized for doing so.[147] Donning a fur coat, Beauty makes her way to the Beast's room.

Here, it is important to acknowledge the rareness of the female perspective in the traditional fairy tale with regard to issues such as female sexuality. Rarely is desire spoken about in a way that empowers the woman. As Jeanna Jorgensen argues, fairy tale plots often center on marriage, making sex "an underlying concern of the fairy tale, though it rarely comes to the forefront."[148] According to Jack Zipes, this sanitization of tales accompanied the growing

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[144] Carter, 78.
[145] Sylvia Bryant, "Re-Constructing Oedipus Through 'Beauty and the Beast,'" *Criticism* 31, no. 4 (1989): 450.
[146] Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*, 80.
[147] Carter, 79.
[148] Jeana Jorgensen, "Innocent Initiations: Female Agency in Eroticized Fairy Tales," *Marvels & Tales* 22, no. 1 (2008): 28.

perception of children—particularly young girls—as a group that needed to be socialized into "appropriate" behavior.

> Throughout the Middle Ages children were gradually regarded as a separate age group with a special set of characteristics, and it was considered most important to advance the cause of *civilité* with explicit and implicit rules of pedagogization so that the manners and mores of the young would reflect the social power, prestige, and hierarchy of the ruling classes.[149]

That is, while the oral folk tale remained popular among adults, the literary fairy tale genre that emerged with Charles Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* and the works of women writers of the late seventeenth century began to view childhood as a highly important period of growth and development. As a result, the classical fairy tale promoted a certain social code through its stories, appropriating the oral folktale to rear children that would abide by French bourgeois values and ideals.[150] Books, toys, and educational materials began to address issues such as table manners, sexual relations, speech, and etiquette.[151]

Even these tales, however, were not so "sanitized" of all sexual subtext as they became in the nineteenth century, with editors like the Grimm brothers. In fact, Wilhelm Grimm heavily edited those tales collected for the Grimms' *Children's and Household Tales* to make them "more respectable… even though the original publication was not expressly intended for children."[152] Carole and D. T. Hanks Jr. write about a similar kind of erotic cleansing in American tales, saying that the American versions of the German tale *Rotkappchen* "have been sanitized to the point where the erotic element disappears and the tragic ending becomes comic.

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[149] Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, 8-9.
[150] Zipes, 29.
[151] Norbert Elias, and E. F. N. Jephcott. *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners*. (New York: Urizen Books, 1978): 36.
[152] Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, 48.

This approach emasculates a powerful story, one which unrevised is a metaphor for the maturing process."[153]

While the Grimm Brothers, of the German tradition, were particularly fierce in this sanitization process, the attitudes reflected here regarding the dangers of sexuality—and particularly female sexuality—extend into the French tradition as well. In Charles Perrault's 1697 version of *Little Red Riding Hood*, for example, the wolf, disguised as Little Red's grandmother, asks her to climb into the bed with him. She removes her clothes, climbs into the bed, and is eaten. Perrault's moral is as follows:

> One sees here that young children
> Especially young girls
> Pretty, well brought-up, and gentle,
> Should never listen to anyone who happens by,
> And if this occurs, it is not so strange
> When the wolf should eat them up.[154]

Little Red, the moral goes, should have been wary of dangerous wolves (men) who pose a threat to her, in the form of murder or rape, should she stray from the path she is told to take. Michel Foucault summarizes the cultural anxiety surrounding sex in his *History of Sexuality*, saying that prior to the 18th century, bodies "made a display of themselves"; the period was characterized by a certain "shameless discourse."[155] In the centuries that followed, however, "Everyone knew…that children had no sex, which was why they were forbidden to talk about it, why one closed one's eyes and stopped one's ears whenever they came to show evidence to the contrary, and why a general and studied silence was imposed."[156] Carter, in her fairy tale, breaks this

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[153] Carole and D.T. Hanks Jr. "Perrault's 'Little Red Riding Hood': Victim of the Revisers." *Children's Literature* 7, no. 1 (1978): 68.
[154] Jack Zipes, *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood: Versions of the Tale in Sociocultural Context*, (South Hadley, Mass: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, 1983), 93.
[155] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*. (New York: Random House, 1980): 3
[156] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 4.

silence. Beauty's sexuality is not condemned; it is demystified. Until she met the Beast, Beauty hadn't the opportunity to understand it.[157]

Again rewriting the Beast's terms of agreement in deciding to stay at the castle, Beauty takes command of her fate and finds the Beast in his room, among "gnawed and bloody bones."[158] Carter's Beauty is not entirely fearless. Although she acknowledges the possibility of devourment, she approaches the Beast, "as if offering, in myself, the key to a peaceable kingdom in which his appetite need not be my extinction."[159] And she realizes then that the Beast is "far more frightened of [her] than [she] was of him."[160] This realization apparently causes all of her fear to evaporate. Traditionally, it is the Beast who poses a threat. It is he who wants something out of Beauty, causing him to occupy the position of feared while Beauty occupies the position of afraid. Simone De Beauvoir summarizes this binary in her *The Second Sex*, writing that "the female is the prey of the species."[161] Carter's Beauty, while aware of the general truth of this statement, certainly does not behave as though she is prey. As the Beast approaches her, he attempts to smell her fear. Now, "he could not."[162] De Beauvoir comments also on the "extreme importance of a woman's first erotic experiences; their repercussions are felt throughout the rest of her life."[163] And indeed, as the Beast licks Beauty's hand, momentous changes appear to occur. The foundations of the house begin to shake and "the walls began to dance."[164] The castle was falling down around them. As for Beauty's transformation, the story ends:

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[157] Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*, 68.
[158] Carter, 81.
[159] Carter, 81.
[160] Carter, 81.
[161]Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, (New York: Vintage, 1949): 372.
[162] Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*, 81.
[163] Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 371.
[164] Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*, 81.

> And each stroke of his tongue ripped off skin after successive skin, all the skins of a life in the world, and left behind a nascent patina of shining hairs. My earrings turned back to water and trickled down my shoulders; I shrugged the drops off my beautiful fur.

Beauty's beautiful fur only confirms the notion that elements of the Beast reside within her. Namely, the desire for liberation, for freedom from the constraints "of a life in the world." We are left, however, with the image of her only partially transformed, suggesting that the girl need not become the Beast fully in order to be liberated. Rather, both the Beast and the girl have human-like and beast-like qualities within them. The Beast learns from Beauty the importance of reciprocity while Beauty learns through her encounter with the Beast the strength in her own desire. Importantly, the Beast does not make Beauty feel as though she should do whatever it takes to please him; rather, as Beauty gives him confidence in his form, he helps her to understand how she can access her complete self.

REBIRTH

As Carter herself has pointed out, the traditional "Beauty and the Beast" tale is more preoccupied with the girl being good rather than the girl undergoing a maturation process in which she learns about herself. Beaumont's Beauty is presumably the epitome of what Beaumont believed the girl should be: virtuous. And in her version of the tale, a virtuous girl is one with little to no self-concern. For the duration of the story, Beaumont's Beauty is preoccupied with wondering what she can do for others. If she learns, she learns she has been selfish and that she should repent. Disney's Beauty follows a similar pattern. Originally more headstrong and less willing to abide by the status quo, she is ultimately still praised for her goodness and her willingness to love a Beast who is perhaps undeserving of her love. Carter's Beauty, on the other hand, is not oblivious to the injustice that surrounds the treatment of women in her world. It is not her duty nor her aim to please anyone, and as a result, she is able to focus on her own growth.

Though the men in the story have restricted her agency, Carter's Beauty is a willing participant in her exchanges with the Beast, and her seclusion in the Beast's castle enables her to reflect upon the world that shunned her. She offers readers insights into the female perspective with an internal dialogue that focuses on her rather than on what she can do for others, which "effects both a deliberate completion of her own story on her own terms and handily interrupts the old story of female goodness and fidelity."[165]

Importantly, *The Tiger's Bride* emphasizes the ways in which a relationship built on reciprocity between Beast and woman can dismantle a binary that has often privileged the Beast. Now far away from the life she shared with her father, Carter's Beauty feels at liberty to explore her sexuality and desire in a way that she, like other young virgins, had previously been shamed out of doing. Recognizing now more than ever how society has policed her body, her movements, and her voice, Beauty finds a Beast within her—a kind of Beast not negatively associated with female otherness, but rather with the kind of animalistic desire that is unhindered by social convention and gendered expectations. Its release challenges the system of patriarchal hegemony that Beauty grew up in and no longer feels a need to conform to. Together, the different components of Carter's tale establish "a new *order* that privileges the 'naked,' neither as pornographic objectification nor as 'natural' state, but simply because it is unmasked."[166] Her portrayal does not allude to who the girl must be nor does it necessarily suggest who the girl should be. Rather, it illustrates who the girl can be.

We leave the girl on an optimistic note, at the height of her empowerment. With her liberation all tied up in the structures that imprison her, Beauty's internal Beast brings down the

[165] Sylvia Bryant, "Re-Constructing Oedipus," 450.
[166] Cristina Bacchilega, ed. "In the Eye of the Beholder", 100.

walls that can no longer contain her. Rising up among the remains of it all, she begins a journey that can truly be hers.

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Salman Rushdie's *Shame*

In her book *Beauty and the Beast: Classic Tales About Animal Brides and Grooms from Around the World*, Maria Tatar makes an important observation regarding Beauty and the Beast tales:

> Empathy and compassion are not always the answer to the challenges faced by Beauty/Handsome and Beast… Some beasts are disenchanted when their repulsed partners hurl them against walls… decapitation also often succeeds in restoring a Beast to the human condition. And finally, tragedy often haunts these stories, with animals that follow the call of the wild and return to nature rather than endure life in the "civilized" world.[167]

Tatar goes on to present numerous tales of animal brides rather than animal grooms: Tales of female cranes who bring wealth to their husbands' families before running off due to a husband's disobedience. Tales of buffalo wives who, upon finding their husbands, transform into beautiful women.[168] The idea of Beast as wife rather than Beast as husband, while not typical of the Beauty and the Beast tradition, is a common fairy tale subtype. Salman Rushdie contributes to this tradition with his novel *Shame*, which draws heavily upon "Beauty and the Beast" motifs to create a new kind of "Beauty and the Beast" story. While it assigns the role of Beast to the woman, Rushdie's novel still draws from the tale-type category assigned to "Beauty and the Beast", ATU 425: The Search for the Lost Husband.

In *Shame*, Rushdie presents the story of a young woman whose female experience transforms her into a Beast, leads her to commit violence against a world that shames her, and ultimately, causes her to perish among the destruction she has caused. Written in 1983,

[167] Maria Tatar, *Beauty and the Beast*, xi.
[168] These tales are "The Grateful Crane" (Japanese) and 'The Piqued Buffalo-Wife" (Native American), respectively.

Rushdie's third novel, while written with a Western audience in mind, is set in a fictional region called Peccavsitan, which is generally understood to be representative of real-life Pakistan.[169] In fact, two of the main male characters of the novel, Raza Hyder and Iskander Harappa, are "construed as satiric manifestations of historical rulers: General [Muhammad] Zia-ul-Haq and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto."[170] Although *Shame* weaves together many complex narratives and addresses a number of topics including nationhood, Islamic culture, and migration, I will apply a feminist perspective here in order to analyze the construction of the girl in one of *Shame*'s narratives in particular: the fairy tale transformation of Sufiya Zinobia Hyder.

Sufiya Zinobia's story is only one of many female narratives in *Shame*. Throughout the novel, we are introduced to various women, strong and proud, who are unfortunately repressed by their husbands and the patriarchal system. As Rushdie's narrator comments,

> I had thought…that what I had on my hands was an almost excessively masculine tale… But the women seem to have taken over; they marched in from the peripheries of the story to demand the inclusion of their own tragedies, histories and comedies…their stories explain, and even subsume, the men's.[171]

We encounter Naveed "Good News" Hyder, Sufiya Zinobia's younger sister, who, while self-possessed and rebellious, ultimately hangs herself under the crushing weight of the many children she unwillingly births. We meet also Rani Harappa, the wife of a powerful political leader who has left her alone and confined to a house far away, where, in quiet resistance, she weaves her husband's wrongdoings into intricate shawls. Sufiya Zinobia's mother, Bilquìs Hyder, is also ultimately confined to the home, going mad and becoming nothing more than a

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[169] *Peccavi* is Latin for "I have sinned" and the suffix –istan denotes "the place of", which loosely translates "Peccavistan" to "the land of the sinners."
[170] M.D. Fletcher, "Rushdie's *Shame* as Apologue." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 21.1 (1986): 120-32.
[171] Salman, Rushdie, *Shame: A Novel*, (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2008): 181.

veiled whisper. Many critical conversations about gender have emerged from Rushdie's work, which can be attributed in part to the conversations about gender—explicit and implicit—he himself incorporates into his work. Many speak of *Shame* as a feminist retelling of "Beauty and the Beast," while others criticize Rushdie's portrayal of women in the novel as misogynistic. Both views will be explored in this chapter.

In my reading of *Shame*, I first assess Sufiya Zinobia's construction as girl, focusing specifically on the shame she embodies and the narrator's reported inspirations for her character. Next, I consider Sufiya Zinobia's transformation into Beast and offer possible readings of this transformation through a feminist lens. Finally, I analyze Sufiya Zinobia at the time of her death and consider what implications her death may have for representations of the girl within the novel. Throughout, I will address criticisms of *Shame* from a feminist perspective while comparing the novel to the other retellings explored in this paper. Taken together, these close readings of different aspects of Sufiya Zinobia's storyline will help to answer the questions: Is the female liberated within this retelling of "Beauty and the Beast?" What new themes arise from this variant, and what enduring aspects of the "Beauty and the Beast" tale help to tell Sufiya Zinobia's story?

Before proceeding, it should be noted that, in interpreting Eastern stories, the Western reader runs the risk of casting value judgments. It is important to recognize that no one story can truly reflect an entire people—especially one so rooted in fiction as Rushdie's. Rushdie's narrator who, like Rushdie, was educated in the West admits, "I have learned Pakistan in slices, the same way as I have learned my growing sister… However I choose to write about over-there, I am forced to reflect that world in fragments of broken mirrors… I must reconcile myself to the

inevitability of the missing bits."[172] Having said this, re-contextualizing "Beauty and the Beast" to Pakistan may offer a fresh perspective of the tale. In one portion of *Shame*, for example, the narrator recounts a conversation he had once with a poet regarding the story of "Beauty and the Beast." In this conversation, the poet remarks that the narrator has become too Westernized, that he should "spend some time, maybe seven years or so, with our village people. Then you will understand that this is an entirely Eastern story…"[173] Since this conversation occurred, the narrator explains, the poet has died. But the narrator had always wanted to ask him, "whatif a Beastji somehow lurked *inside* Beauty Bibi? Whatif the beauty were herself the beast?"[174] Ironically, the narrator has no doubt the poet would have responded: "…Such saint-and-monster conjunctions are conceivable in the case of men; alas! such is our nature. But the whole essence of Woman denies such a possibility."[175]

And it is with this that Sufiya Zinobia's story really begins.

THE ROLE OF SHAME IN THE MAKING OF A GIRL

Shame in Beauty and the Beast Tales

Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast" brings us the story of a beauty characterized first and foremost by her kind spirit. Often, attempts at feminist retellings favor headstrong beauties, independent and self-possessed. Belle's story, for example, opens with a musical sequence that piques audience interest in her courage to be different. Carter's Beauty is fearless in her continued rejection of the Beast's request for her to remove her clothes.

[172] Salman Rushdie, *Shame*, 66.
[173] Rushdie, 165.
[174] Rushdie, 165.
[175] Rushdie, 165.

Rushdie's novel, on the other hand, introduces us to Sufiya Zinobia, a "miracle gone wrong" and the very embodiment of her parents' shame. She lacks independence (a nanny cares for her until she is well into her twenties), and, at least early on, her feelings of shame seem to possess her rather than the other way around. Eventually, Sufiya Zinobia, consumed by the shame she is made to experience, becomes the Beast of Shame itself.

This action-filled retelling of "Beauty and the Beast" deviates from Beaumont's simple story of dinnertime talk between two strangers and engages more so with a sense of urgency found also in the Disney version. However, for all its plot-point deviations, the underlying theme of female shame in Rushdie's novel is familiar and has indeed been crucial to the essence of "Beauty and the Beast" tales. Beauty, gifted with the power (and more accurately, the responsibility) of freeing the Beast through heterosexual love is shamed for bringing the Beast near death when she leaves him behind.[176] Notably, in the 1991 Disney version, Belle exclaims "This is all my fault!" upon seeing the Beast's forlorn state in the magic mirror as a result of her departure. And though in *The Tiger's Bride*, shame on Beauty's part is cleverly replaced with sympathy for the Beast instead, this is more of an exception than a rule in the literary tradition of "Beauty and the Beast." A critical feminist approach to the tale would suggest that the experience of shame—typically Beauty's burden to bear—is gendered. This may help to explain Rushdie's construction of Sufiya Zinobia.

Shame as a Gendered Experience

In her research on the psychology of shame, Helen Block Lewis concludes that women, more so than men, tend to experience shame for failing to meet expectations in the eyes of

[176] Zipes discusses this in his *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* (p. 48). He analyzes how Perrault made the tale such that the man is wild and undomesticated and the woman is his caretaker and must bring him salvation.

others.[177] Like psychologist Michael Lewis, she affirms that girls are socialized early on to experience shame particularly with regard to the maintenance of interpersonal relationships, and that, often, these feelings of shame manifest themselves as feelings of personal inadequacy.[178] In spite of the negative effects such feelings are likely to have on girls' senses of self-worth, philosopher Gabriele Taylor argues that shame is "always constructive" in that it offers an opportunity for self-reflection, thereby reminding an agent of his or her true values. Taylor divides shame into categories of genuine shame and false shame, which may be used to assess the shame experienced by Sufiya Zinobia. Genuine shame is that shame which is felt when an agent acts in a way that is at odds with his or her own values whereas false shame is that shame which is felt when an agent is made to feel bad about actions which are actually *not* at odds with an agent's own values.[179] For example, I may experience genuine shame if I slap someone because physical violence is against my personal value system. On the other hand, I may experience false shame when accused of lying to someone, although I do not believe that what I said was actually a lie. That is, I have experienced false shame if "once the [initial] shock of shame eases," I realize I have done nothing wrong by my own standards.[180] Ultimately, Taylor argues that the benefits of experiencing shame outweigh the risks to one's identity. She admits, however, that a surplus of false shame can be dangerous for the agent and can cause her to lose her genuine self.

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[177] Helen Block Lewis, "The Role of Shame in Depression in Women." *Women and Depression*, ed. Ruth Formanek and Anita Gurian. New York: Springer, 1987.
[178] Michael Lewis, *Shame: The Exposed Self*, New York: The Free press, 1992.
[179] Gabriele Taylor, *Pride, shame, and guilt*: *Emotions of self-assessment*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985.
[180] Jennifer C. Manion, "Girls Blush, Sometimes: Gender, Moral Agency, and the Problem of Shame." *Hypatia* 18, no. 3 (2003): 27.

False Shame in the Case of Sufiya Zinobia

While Jennifer C. Manion argues that the gendered nature of shame precludes shame from always being the constructive emotion Taylor believes it to be, Taylor's framework of genuine versus false shame is nonetheless useful for evaluating the construction of Rushdie's female protagonist. Before applying this framework to Sufiya Zinobia, however, an understanding of her story pre-transformation is necessary. As stated previously, Sufiya Zinobia was the "miracle gone wrong." Her parents had failed to birth a boy the first time around, when "the umbilical cord wound itself around [the] baby's neck and was transformed into a hangman's noose."[181] Raza and Bilquìs, "unable to prevent [their] first-born son from being strangled to death in the womb," were determined to conceive a boy once again.[182] When the news came around that Bilquìs was pregnant a second time, the parents were certain of their victory. Said Bilquìs, "'Raz, he's coming back, the little angel, just you wait and see.'"[183]

But the child was not their little angel—far from it. The midwife handed the new parents their daughter, pointing out how beautiful she was. She was met only with silence, "the ancient language of defeat."[184]

The silence did not last long.

"'Mistakes are often made!' Raza shouted. 'Terrible blunders are not unknown!…And blasted from his lips like cannonballs: 'Genitalia! Can! Be! Obscured!'"[185] Raza Hyder then proceeds to question a bump at the child's "nether zones," asking if it could not be possible that such a bump was evidence for a son. When Sufiya Zinobia's parents "had to admit the

[181] Rushdie, 81.
[182] Rushdie, 80.
[183] Rushdie, 87.
[184] Rushdie, 88.
[185] Rushdie, 88.

immutability of her gender, to submit, as faith demands, to God; at this very instant the extremely new and soporific being in Raza's arms began—it's true!—to blush.'"[186] And so, Sufiya Zinobia, the tale's Beauty, is shamed at her very birth simply for having been born a girl. Notably, she *experiences* this shame at birth, too, as shown through her blushing. We might assume that this shame is compounded for Sufiya Zinobia by the fact that, as H.B. Lewis and M. Lewis argue, it comes in the form of failure in her interpersonal relationships. While her father is eventually able to find love for his daughter in spite of her gender, Sufiya Zinobia's mother, Bilquìs, is unable to accept her first child and instead showers her second daughter, Naveed, also known as Good News, with affection. Such an observation suggests that the shame Bilquìs holds with regard to Sufiya Zinobia does not simply arise from the fact that Sufiya Zinobia was born a girl, but also from the fact that Sufiya Zinobia, in particular, was supposed to be a boy. Sufiya's femaleness is a constant reminder to Bilquìs' of her failure to birth a child of real value. Even several years after Sufiya Zinobia's birth, Bilquìs admits, "'I must accept it: she is my shame.'"[187]

It is not Bilquìs' shame alone that Sufiya Zinobia experiences, however. The narrator describes Sufiya Zinobia as one of the "janitors of the unseen," collecting and experiencing the shame of all those who *should* experience shame but do not.[188] Interestingly, her future husband—Omar Khayyam Shakil—is one of these shameless people. In fact, where Sufiya Zinobia embodies shame, the narrator identifies Omar Khayyam as the embodiment of shamelessness. Omar Khayyam, the story's "peripheral hero," whose birth was the product of some scandalous night, was born the son of three mothers—all sisters—and raised in a mansion

[186] Rushdie, 89.
[187] Rushdie, 101.
[188] Rushdie, 125.

from which he was not permitted to leave for several years. On his twelfth birthday, Omar Khayyam demanded that his mothers allow him to escape the mansion that they themselves refused to exit. His mothers (which of whom actually birthed him is not known) granted his request on the condition that he should not allow himself to experience shame.

> 'What does it feel like?' [Omar Khayyam] asked…
> 'It makes women feel like to cry and die,' said Chhunni-ma, 'but men, it makes them go wild.'
> 'Except sometimes,' his middle mother muttered with prophetic spite, 'it happens the other way around.'[189]

Not only is there shame in *being* a woman, but the manner in which women and men experience shame is different—helplessness as opposed to wildness—something that will be assessed further in Sufiya Zinobia's transformation. For the moment, there is another thing worth noting about Omar Khayyam Shakil: he has far from won the narrator's—or really, any of the characters'—favor. As the narrator says of Omar Khayyam, "Dizzy, peripheral, inverted, infatuated, insomniac, stargazing, fat: what manner of hero is this?"[190] Identified early on as an unattractive hypnotist and a misogynist, Omar Khayyam Shakil can be said to be the story's initial Beast.

We can foreshadow what is to come through the union of Sufiya Zinobia and Omar Khayyam Shakil, two antithetical characters.

"Shamelessness, shame. The roots of violence."[191]

Before Sufiya Zinobia is married, however, the narrator discusses three people who inspired her character. She was indeed born to embody shame—a characteristic of the female that, although present, is not oft-emphasized in "Beauty and the Beast." Did Rushdie choose a

[189] Rushdie, 33-34.
[190] Rushdie, 18.
[191] Rushdie, 118.

rather unremarkable girl to occupy his story's center, then? In Beaumont's tale, Beauty was at the very least exceptional for her willingness to sacrifice herself for her father and for her unimaginable kindness in the face of her sisters' cruelty. Does Sufiya Zinobia's overwhelming shame mean there is nothing exceptional to be said of her? Not quite. Ruminating over his creation of Sufiya Zinobia, *Shame*'s narrator, speaking directly to the audience, tells us that "three ghosts" were placed inside his Sufiya Zinobia. The narrator calls the first ghost Anna Muhammad, who was murdered by her father for having been accused of sleeping with a white boy. The second is the ghost of an Asian girl who was beaten on an underground train by a group of white, teenage boys. The narrator writes of this instance,

> Afterwards, surveying the wreckage of their rage, they [the boys] look bewildered, uncomprehending, young. Did we do such things? Us? But we're just ordinary kids, nice people, we didn't know we could...then, slowly, pride dawns on them, pride in their power, in having learned to hit back. And I imagine what would have happened if such a fury could have been released in that girl on her underground train…And they? What would they have done? How to tell the police they were beaten up by a mere girl...? I feel gleeful about this notion: it's a seductive, silky thing, this violence, yes it is.[192]

Here, we learn that narrator finds joy in the prospect of the girl "hitting back," in finding justice, something that foreshadows Sufiya Zinobia's transformation. We will return to this throughout the chapter. The last ghost within Sufiya Zinobia is a boy who was able to ignite himself on fire of his own accord, "without dousing himself in petrol or applying any external flame…finding the key, stepping into the truth, a boy began to burn."[193] We might find, then, that the story begins with a fairly complicated view of who Sufiya Zinobia is. Unlike Disney's Belle or Carter's Beauty, Sufiya Zinobia is referred to as the embodiment of her parents' shame, assumed to be weak, fragile, and unwanted by anyone in an oppressive, patriarchal world. However, the narrator also tells us that she was created in the image of a woman who was terribly wronged for

[192] Rushdie, 120.
[193] Rushdie, 120.

her sexuality, of another woman wronged for her womanhood and presumably her race, and of a boy who quite literally burned with his ability to see some sort of truth. The narrator takes pleasure in thinking about the revenge these women might have been able to taste with their own justified rage and admires the power of the burning boy. And so we find that Sufiya Zinobia, even at the start of her story, has within her a sense of justice, power, fire, fury, and violence.

By the end of Sufiya Zinobia's story pre-transformation, we know her by the shame of her girlhood, the three ghosts which inspired her, and one more thing: mental disability. This last point is the subject of much controversy surrounding *Shame*. The narrator tells us that at the age of two, Sufiya Zinobia contracted brain fever. Its cure—or, the narrator tells us, perhaps it was the abuse of her mother—turned Sufiya Zinobia "into a sort of idiot…and idiots are, by definition, innocent."[194] From here onward, Sufiya Zinobia grows, "her mind more slowly than her body, and owing to this slowness she remains, for [the narrator], somehow clean (*pak*) in the midst of a dirty world."[195] Importantly, it is Omar Khayyam Shakil—the shameless, misogynistic hypnotist—who becomes her doctor. The story's "peripheral hero", initially something of a Beast, begins to take on Beauty's traditional role in "Beauty and the Beast," as he helps to care for Sufiya Zinobia as she grows up. Occasionally, Sufiya Zinobia's shame causes her to blush so much as to physically scald anyone who touches her. And later, violent episodes leave her seething, convulsing, broken out in boils, seemingly rabid—something Shakil, in this role reversal, is able (and responsible for) subduing in her. As we will see, he can only do so much. The false shame Sufiya Zinobia experiences due to externally imposed expectations of her consumes her and gives rise to a Beast.

[194] Rushdie, 119.
[195] Rushdie, 123.

FROM GIRL TO BEAST

Characterizing the Beast in its Early Stages of Growth: Two Premarital Images of Transformation

The first time we are presented with Sufiya Zinobia's transformation is in the case of the turkeys. It is at this point that Sufiya Zinobia discovers "in the labyrinths of her unconscious self the hidden path that links *sharam* [shame] to violence."[196] When Sufiya Zinobia's family moves next door to Raza Hyder's (Sufiya Zinobia's father's) old love interest, Bilquìs Hyder vocalizes her shame. Raza, however, dismisses her, saying there is nothing to be done about it. That day, the many loud turkeys that the former love interest, Pinkie, holds in her possession serve as a constant reminder to Bilquìs of the shame she feels she is being subjected to—shame that Sufiya Zinobia experiences on behalf of her mother. The next night, after Sufiya has fallen asleep, the Loo—a hot wind that blows over Pakistan—seeps through the windows of her bedroom. Sufiya Zinobia rises from her bed, still sleeping, and makes her way "through the house, into the garden and over the wall," causing the guards at the gate to fall immediately into a deep sleep.[197] The next morning, the household awakens to find Sufiya Zinobia "snoring gently amidst the corpses of the birds;" she had "torn off their heads and then reached down into their bodies to draw their guts up through their necks with her tiny and weaponless hands."[198]She had no use for weapons, for she herself had become one.

As the narrator puts it, Sufiya Zinobia's attack on the turkeys exemplifies "opposing elements of a fairy-tale combined in a single character."[199] That is, this attack illustrates Beauty

[196] Rushdie, 144.
[197] Rushdie, 142.
[198] Rushdie,143.

as the Beast—without Beauty's conscious understanding that she has ever become the Beast. In fact, "on seeing the devastation [of the turkeys] around her, she [Sufiya Zinobia] fainted."[200] Sufiya's relationship to her own beastliness is one in which the Beast consumes her entirely, giving Sufiya little control over her movements and behavior—and thus little agency in the matter. Not only this, but the girl's body has an adverse reaction to having housed the Beast in the first place. The morning after the turkey massacre, Sufiya Zinobia's nursemaid, Shahbanou, notices that Sufiya Zinobia's body has broken out "in huge blotchy rashes, red and purple with small hard pimples in the middle…great jets of spittle flew out through her [Sufiya's] lips."[201] Sufiya Zinobia is immediately taken to a nearby hospital to be cared for by her future husband and Pakistan's leading immunologist, Omar Khayyam Shakil. Thus, Sufiya Zinobia's body's rejection of the Beast may speak to her unwillingness to commit violent acts such as the killing of the birds. The Beast of Shame within her helps her to eliminate a source of shame in her life, symbolized by the turkeys; however, it does not necessarily have her permission to do so.

The second instance in which the Beast consumes Sufiya Zinobia is in the case of her sister, Naveed's, marriage. Naveed Hyder, destined to marry one man, asserts at the last minute that she will instead be marrying a different man, bringing incredible shame upon her parents. The new wedding, to be held on the same day as the old, is stiff with the dishonor of this turn of events. Once more, Sufiya Zinobia, experiencing shame that was not hers to feel, is consumed by the Beast. She "buried her teeth in [Naveed's fiancé's] neck," so that after the fiancé recovered,

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[199] Rushdie, 144. One might note here that the narrator directly references the fairy tale in his analysis of this situation. In fact, throughout the novel, he draws the audience's attention to the fact that he is telling a fairy tale story. Perhaps he, too, views the fairy tale as a tool for communicating a complex but important message regarding the girl—a message that will soon be presented in this chapter.
[200] Rushdie, 143.
[201] Rushdie, 145.

"he was never able to move his head to the left."[202] Omar Khayyam's hypnotic skill is again required to subdue the Beast that overcame Sufiya Zinobia, although this time, more skill is required of Omar Khayyam than ever before. The Beast is growing in strength.

Consummation and the Threat of Rape

The two aforementioned transformations Sufiya Zinobia undergoes provide context for a series of transformations that more directly concern the gendered nature of her shame. These transformations occur after Sufiya Zinobia's marriage to Omar Khayyam Shakil, who, in another act of shamelessness, asks for the nineteen-year old woman's hand even though he is more than thirty years her senior. When Shakil appears at the Hyders' door with his proposal, he is met with outrage and disgust. Ultimately, however, Bilquìs is glad to have an opportunity to marry off their eldest daughter to a man who can take her off their hands and care for her—outbursts and all. When Raza questions his wife, Bilquìs simply responds: "'She is not so stupid now… she can dress herself, go to the pot, and she does not wet her bed.'"[203] Raza is incredulous, asking whether this qualifies his daughter to be a wife. In the end though, it appears that it does. Agency over bodily functions and motor skills is considered agency enough to be someone else's life partner even if the girl cannot consent to assuming the traditional responsibilities of a wife—which involve caring for someone else. And so Shame and Shameless are married. Shakil's shamelessness in proposing such a marriage, however, is not what triggers the Beast to rear its head within Sufiya Zinobia. Instead, her transformation is born out of the consummation of the marriage. Or rather, the societal expectation that a marriage should be consummated and the resulting feelings of failure Sufiya Zinobia experiences for being unable to meet this expectation.

[202] Rushdie, 179.
[203] Rushdie, 168.

As such, the specific nature of Sufiya Zinobia's transformation post-marriage can be related to the threat of rape posed to her body and her feelings of fury, confusion, fear, and inadequacy.

Shame deviates from the fairy tale's traditional avoidance of any direct acknowledgment of sexuality, locating it not only as central to a marriage, but also to the female protagonist's self concept, as will soon be illustrated. Perhaps more notable than the simple fact that *Shame* addresses the topic of sex is *how* exactly Rushdie explores this topic. In her essay, "Innocent Initiations: Female Agency in Eroticized Fairy Tales," Jeana Jorgenson examines contemporary eroticized fairy tales, which "privilege the erotic encounter as the focal point of the plot, though the degree to which sex forms the plot is variable."[204] She argues that eroticized fairy tales, which often pride themselves for openly tackling the subject of sex in a genre that has long avoided its mention, also often tend to problematically associate female innocence with sexual eagerness. The association, which is meant to evoke desire within readers, also glamorizes, in a way, the exploitation of female naiveté. Jorgenson concludes that "the incorporation of unconventional sex in rewritten fairy tales is no guarantee of the story being progressive."[205] Jorgenson's conclusion can be applied more broadly. The presence of sex in fairy tales—as in other genres and popular media—does not indicate that storytellers are progressive in their portrayals of hierarchies and power differentials. A discussion of *Shame*'s "progressiveness," as it were, would arise from the notion that Rushdie treats Sufiya Zinobia's condition and lack of sexual experience as a reason she *shouldn't* engage in intercourse. That is, Rushdie does not glamorize the sexual encounter between husband and wife. Instead, he emphasizes the problematic nature of consummation in the case of Sufiya Zinobia and Omar Khayyam, turning a discussion of sex into a discussion of nonconsensual sex, or rape.

[204] Jeana Jorgensen, "Innocent Initiations," 28.
[205] Jeana Jorgensen, "Innocent Initiations," 33.

The threat of rape posed to Sufiya Zinobia's body is vocalized by Shahbanou, the Hyder family's *ayah*, or nanny, whose words and actions after Sufiya Zinobia's marriage are the direct result of her attempts to protect the young woman's perceived innocence. After the wedding, Shahbanou's "fierce solicitude for Sufiya Zinobia" leads her to question Omar Khayyam Shakil, who is of higher authority than she, about his expectations of his wife.[206]

> 'Doctor Sahib,' [said Shahbanou], 'you must tell me what are your intentions.'[…] 'Don't worry,' [Omar Shakil] soothed the ayah, 'I know the girl is simple. I have no desire to impose my, to force myself upon, to demand my marital,' whereupon Shahbanou nodded and said, 'That's O.K. for now, Sahib, but how long will you wait? Men are only men.'
> 'I will wait until my wife is agreeable,' Omar Khayyam replied angrily. 'I am no junglee man.'… Shahbanou turned to go. 'Remember, if you get impatient,' she told him in a matter-of-fact voice, 'that I am waiting to kill you if you try.'[207]

Both Shahbanou and Omar Khayyam acknowledge that consummating the marriage would in fact be rape, considering Sufiya Zinobia's mental illness. Still, Shahbanou is skeptical; as we know, Omar Khayyam has been characterized throughout the story for his shamelessness. The narrator tells us, after all, that earlier in the story, Omar Khayyam hypnotized women into following him to bed, declaring disingenuously that a hypnotist cannot inspire anyone to do something they would be unwilling to do when not hypnotized. Sufiya Zinobia's innocence, coupled with Omar Khayyam's lack thereof, thus emphasizes the very real threat of rape in the female protagonist's life. This threat of rape is central to the plot of the story hereafter. It is this threat, and Sufiya Zinobia's inability to understand this threat, that eventually transforms her from girl to Beast, from threatened to threatening. It is the threat of rape that makes her off-limits, causing Sufiya Zinobia to feel inadequate and filling her, once again, with shame for her femaleness.

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[206] Rushdie, 222.
[207] Rushdie, 222.

Seeing as the threat of rape is so pivotal to Sufiya Zinobia's character arc, we must take a step back, for a moment, and recognize that the threat of rape posed to her cannot simply be ascribed to her mental illness—though this certainly makes matters worse. Rather, the threat of rape posed to her body can be read as a commentary on the threat of rape posed to the female body in general and the gendered nature of sexual assault. In her essay "Foucault, Rape, and the Construction of the Feminine Body," Ann J. Cahill writes that "the act of rape is distinct from other types of assault not solely because of the body parts involved in the act, but more importantly, because of the role which rape (or more precisely, the threat of rape) plays in the production of the specifically (and socially recognizable) feminine body."[208] She says also that "while men are capable of being raped…they are not subjected to the pervasive threat of rape which faces women in the present culture…[and which] emphasizes the extent to which rape enforces a systematic…sexualized control of women."[209] The construction of the feminine body makes it so that women must be hyper-vigilant about their bodies at all times. Any slip in this vigilance causes them to be blamed for any resulting attack on their bodies.

Sufiya Zinobia's body is put at particular risk, seeing as she does not entirely understand the nature of sex and therefore feels no need to exert this hyper-vigilance over her body. Shahbanou must do it for her. Believing that a man's sexual appetite must be satisfied somehow, and not trusting Sufiya Zinobia's husband to leave the mentally impaired woman alone, Shahbanou offers her own body to Omar Khayyam. Here, again, the lines of consent are blurred. While Shahbanou apparently consents to sex with Omar Khayyam, she does so because she feels she must. When she is found to be sleeping with Omar Khayyam, she is fired for her behavior—another unfortunate ending for a woman's story in *Shame.* This affair coupled with Shahbanou's

[208] Ann J. Cahill, "Foucault, Rape, and the Construction," 46.
[209] Ann J. Cahill, "Foucault, Rape, and the Construction," 45.

limited options in protecting Sufiya Zinobia present another reason for Sufiya's transformation into Beast.

During the affair, Sufiya Zinobia is acutely aware that Shahbanou does something for her most nights. And she struggles to understand why it is that she herself cannot do what is expected of her. Why does she have a husband? What are husbands for? Shahbanou tells her they are for money and babies. "But don't worry, bibi, money is no problem and babies aren't for you."[210] It is this comment that initiates Sufiya Zinobia's transformation. In trying to understand why babies aren't for her, she figures something must be wrong with her. She thinks:

> There is a thing that women do at night with husbands. She [Sufiya Zinobia] does not do it, Shahbanou does it for her…Her husband does not come to her at night. Here are two things she does not like: that he does not come, that's one, and the thing itself makes two, it sounds horrible, it must be, the shrieks the moans the wet and smelly sheets… Disgusting. But she *is a wife*. She *has a husband*. She can't work this out. The horrible thing and the horrible not-doing-the-thing. [211]

Sufiya Zinobia experiences shame for not being able to be a "good" wife, even though she does not believe that sex is something she *should* engage in. To her, the idea is terrible. Still, the expectation that she should engage in it is enough to make her feel inadequate. To make her feel as though what Shahbanou does for her is "her own stupid fault" rather than Omar Khayyam's.[212]

These feelings of shame lead her to commit the very act of violence as Beast that her own female body, as woman, is susceptible to: rape.

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[210] Rushdie, 226.
[211] Rushdie, 227.
[212] Rushdie, 226.

Female Masculinity and The De-Sexualizing Role of the Veil in Sexual Attacks Committed by the Woman

Among critics, Sufiya Zinobia's transformation into Beast post-marriage is among the most controversial topics covered in *Shame.* And for good reason. The following passage offers a fairly comprehensive image of the Beast that springs out of Sufiya Zinobia's marital shame:

> Shame [Sufiya Zinobia] walks the streets of night. In the slums four youths are transfixed by those appalling eyes, whose deadly yellow fire blows like a wind through the lattice-work of the veil. They follow her to the rubbish-dump of doom, rats to her piper, automata dancing in the all-consuming light from the black-veiled eyes. Down she lies, and what Shahbanou took upon herself is finally done to Sufiya. Four husbands come and go. Four of them in and out, and then her hands reach for the first boy's neck. The others stand still and wait their turn. And heads hurled high, sinking into the scattered clouds; nobody saw them fall. She rises, goes home. And sleeps; the Beast subsides.[213]

In her transformation, Sufiya Zinobia commits the very sexual act she so detested, the act of rape that constantly threatened her body. This description raises two questions: What does it mean for the woman in *Shame* to be presented as a rapist? Is a feminist interpretation of this transformation possible? Referring to the passage above, literary theorist and political commentator, Aijaz Ahmad, claims:

> [Sufiya Zinobia] becomes the oldest of misogynist myths: the virgin who is really a vampire, the irresistible temptress who seduces men in order to kill them, not an object of male manipulation but a devourer of hapless men… The woman herself becomes, in this version, a rapist. For… so little able is he [Rushdie] to conceive of a real possibility of regenerative projects on part of the people who actually exist within our contemporary social reality… [that] the powers which he, as author, bestows upon [Sufiya Zinobia] in the moment of her triumph are powers only of destruction."[214]

In essence, Ahmad takes issue with a familiar trope: the hyper-sexualized woman, a danger to innocent men. An actual monster.

Ahmad has a point here. Female sexuality has, time and time again, been demonized in the fairy tale. In *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*, Jack Zipes points to the

[213] Rushdie, 232.
[214] Aijaz Ahmad, "Rushdie's Shame: Postmodernism, Migrancy and Representation of Women," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 26, no. 24 (1991): 1468.

numerous ways in which revisions of Little Red Riding Hood have depicted Little Red's sexuality as the reason for the trouble she finds. Such common fairy tale tropes are prevalent in the mainstream media, as shown through popular movies like *Pirates of the Caribbean*, in which beautiful sirens seduce young men only to drown them, and *Jennifer's Body,* in which an "evil Jennifer satisfies her appetite for human flesh with [her] school's male population."[215] The temptation of women's bodies, and more importantly, women's *intentional use of their bodies* to bring unsuspecting men to terrible ends, has produced an unfortunate image of the woman's body as inherently sexual—dangerously sexual—as her primary means for asserting an evil power over others.

In this way, one might agree that, yes, Rushdie's female Beast does, in some way, contribute to the already-existing trove of sexually threatening female Beasts.

I argue, however, that while many female beasts are demonized for their *femininity*, Rushdie's female Beast commits what is a typically masculine violence. This draws our attention not to stereotypical images of the feminine and promiscuous female Beast, but instead to the inconsistency of the female rapist with the typical female experience. I propose also that the veil Rushdie's Beast wears as she commits sexual violence serves to de-sexualize her, ridding her of the female body that has made her so susceptible to rape and further detaching feminine seduction from her beastliness.

Let us turn first to the masculine nature of the violence Sufiya Zinobia commits. Rushdie does not attempt—nor would he be able—to convince us that rape is a crime commonly perpetrated by the female body. In fact, the notion that a woman could physically overpower a

[215] "Jennifer's Body (2009.)" IMDB. Accessed April 29, 2018. https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1131734/.

man without his consent whatsoever is an unfamiliar notion, drawing our attention to the distinctness of *Shame*'s female Beast from the typical female experience. That is, Rushdie attributes to this female Beast the powers of a masculine violence, emphasizing how strange it is that a female should be capable of committing such violence, and highlighting how often the power dynamic portrayed here is reversed. As mentioned previously, the threat of rape "plays [a role] in the production of the specifically (and socially recognizable) feminine body."[216] This has been established as especially true in the case of Sufiya Zinobia, who is threatened, for multiple reasons, by the possibility of rape. What's more, Cahill explains that the man who experiences rape is often shamed in society for having been made helpless, and "at that moment, a '*social woman*'" (emphasis is mine).[217] Thus, the portrayal of Sufiya Zinobia—or the female in general—as rapist is shocking, rather than the predictable trope that Ahmad suggests it is.

Even if the image of the female as rapist isn't pervasive, however, the image of her as "the irresistible temptress", as Ahmad puts it, certainly is. In such portrayals, the woman may lure men in with her sexual charm before destroying him in some sexless act such as drowning, casting a spell, stabbing, or something of that nature. The woman's sexual appeal is coupled with beastliness. In Sufiya Zinobia's case, however, the Beast does not use her sexuality to murder her victims. Instead, her donning of the veil precludes any male from being "tempted" by her physical form in any way. Perhaps this is why the Beast wears the veil. As Bahar Davary explains, "some Muslim women…[who don the veil] wish to limit the objectification of woman."[218] While Sufiya Zinobia as Beast preys on men, the veil prevents her from being subject to the male gaze as she does so, something that essentially serves to dissociate her from

[216] Ann J. Cahill, "Foucault, Rape, and the Construction," 46.
[217] Ann J. Cahill, "Foucault, Rape, and the Construction," 45.
[218] Bahar Davary, "Miss Elsa and the Veil: Honor, Shame, and Identity Negotiations," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 25, no. 2 (2009): 50.

the female body that has caused her so much shame. And seeing as she uses hypnosis, rather than some other feminine charm, to seduce her victims, Sufiya Zinobia's beastliness is not linked to her being female in the same way that other fairy tales use sexuality to link beastliness and femaleness. Moreover, the veil may serve other purposes aside from delinking beastliness and femininity. Generally, "wearing the veil assumes that doing so predicates the one who wears it as one who adheres to traditional family values and norms including fidelity and/or sexual purity."[219] As such, the veil may simply be ironic, seeing as Sufiya Zinobia only dons the veil as Beast, when she is determined to commit acts that would constitute quite the opposite of sexual purity. Or, perhaps the veil, commonly deemed oppressive in the West, is employed here to drive home the image of the oppressed obtaining revenge. Should we note that "for some Muslims, veiling is a sign of honor… not only [for] the woman but also [for] her family, her community, and the society in which she lives", we might even view the veil as a symbol of bringing honor back to a woman as shamed as Sufiya Zinobia.[220]

Returning to Ahmad's argument, I should repeat that none of this is to say that the portrayal of the female as Beast has not been a damaging and all too common portrayal of the woman in the fairy tale. In fact, as I will explore, there are certainly aspects of *Shame* that may do more damage than good. However, there is in fact a reading of *Shame* in which the woman's transformation into Beast places a spotlight on her oppression rather than on her inherent capacity to do evil. In fact, as Rushdie explains earlier in the story, Sufiya Zinobia is inspired, in part, by women he wishes could have fought back against the evils they experienced. Of the criticism that Sufiya Zinobia commits violence rather than employing the many other—and more realistic—methods that women have employed to initiate change, I can only say that it seems the

[219] Bahar Davary, "Miss Elsa," 49.
[220] Bahar Davary, "Miss Elsa," 50.

narrator was keen on a revenge story. Perhaps this says less about Rushdie's beliefs regarding the capacity for women to initiate change in other ways and more about the conversations that arise when sexualized acts are no longer directed toward women. The violence Sufiya Zinobia commits, at least, is one that underscores and demonizes a masculine oppression rather than a feminine quality.

SUFIYA ZINOBIA *v.* BERTHA MASON: MADWOMEN IN THE ATTIC, FEMALE AGENCY, AND FATE

The Question of Female Agency

A discussion of Sufiya Zinobia's transformation would not be complete unless it addressed the question of newfound agency. As discussed in previous chapters, Beaumont's and Disney's "Beauty and the Beast" stories allow their heroines varying degrees of agency at different points in the plot. However, the underlying truth remains that Beauty's shame at having hurt the Beast confines her to the castle. In Carter's *The Tiger's Bride*, Beauty acts with significantly more agency throughout the story; however, she herself emphasizes that she is not a free agent. However much growth she may have found through her encounters with the Beast, the patriarchal society in which her father raised her determines much of her fate. *Shame* may be a different case, however. Deviating from the traditional plot, Sufiya Zinobia as the Beast appears to possess a degree of agency entirely unavailable to other women in the story, who are, in more than one case, under house arrest. With her new strength, Sufiya Zinobia incites terror in her patriarchal society, loosing the wrath of the shame she has experienced. As with other tales explored in this paper, it is doubtful that the question of female agency can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" response. Rather, a more nuanced approach to agency must ensue, acknowledging if and when the woman is granted agency and what the implications of this are.

To begin this discussion, I would like to address first an argument that claims that Sufiya Zinobia does not and cannot have agency due to her mental illness. If this is true, the conversation surrounding agency ends when Sufiya Zinobia is an infant. Aijaz Ahmad writes:

> …The problem with this metaphor of mental illness is that the pressures and processes of gendering, which are social and historical in character, and which impose upon women the possibility of deformation and incapacity, but which are open to resistance and reversal by women's own actions, are given to us in the form of a *physiological* insufficiency on *her* [Sufiya Zinobia's] part…this shift from the social to the physiological forecloses the possibility that the person in question can regain the control of her body, let alone her brain, through her own initiative…reversals of such conditions are rare, and they require the agency not so much of the patient as of doctors and hospitals.[221]

Here, Ahmad claims that, in imparting Sufiya Zinobia with mental illness, Rushdie has transformed the social obstacles of gendering into physiological ones, over which the girl has no control. That is, where many women are *socially* "incapacitated" through gendering, they are nonetheless, through their own volition, able to reclaim their identities. In Sufiya Zinobia's case, the gendered shame she experienced at birth left her *mentally* "incapacitated", and seeing as the "reversals of such conditions are rare", there is little she can do on her own to reclaim her femaleness. Later, Ahmad says "the novel simply fails to recover from this eliding of the social into the physiological."[222] With this, Ahmad implies two things: The first is that Sufiya Zinobia's mental illness precludes her from maintaining control over her body. The second is that her inability to regain control over her body prevents her from participating in the resistance most women are capable of. Essentially, then, Ahmad asserts that Sufiya Zinobia is not awarded agency.

I argue, however, that neither doctors nor hospitals are required for Sufiya Zinobia to acquire agency; she acquires this as the Beast. Earlier in her transformation process, however,

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[221] Aijaz Ahmad, "Rushdie's Shame," 1467.
[222] Ahmad, 1467.

Ahmad's point may in fact be illustrated in Sufiya Zinobia's internal battle with the Beast. Experiencing shame over her inability to consummate her marriage, Sufiya begins to see images in which "she is biting somebody, hard."[223] The images make her question herself: "Why is she so bad? What makes her so rotten, evil?"[224] As the sensation grows, she begins to wonder more explicitly how it is possible to change into something. The sensation is unpleasant. She does her best to fight it off, repeatedly telling whatever "it" is to "Go away go away go away."[225] As Ahmad argues, Sufiya Zinobia appears not to be able to reclaim her body. She cannot control the Beast that overcomes her, in spite of her efforts. Or, perhaps, even in these moments, there is some part of her that wills the transformation to occur. Omar Khayyam thinks as much after both he and Raza Hyder, Sufiya Zinobia's father, find out that Sufiya Zinobia is the one behind the tragic disappearances of many young men.

Before Omar Khayyam has this revelation, father and husband "padlocked [Sufiya] to attic beams." To prevent her from escaping, they then "bricked up the attic window and fastened huge bolts to the door; and twice in every twenty-four hours, Omar Khayyam would go…to administer the drugs that turned [Sufiya Zinobia] from one fairy-tale into another, into sleeping beauty instead of beauty-and-the-beast."[226] The startling imagery of the girl chained in the attic immediately brings to mind *Jane Eyre*'s Bertha Mason, Mr. Rochester's violent and insane wife, a "clothed hyena," who sets fire to furniture and attacks Mr. Rochester.[227] Bertha is described in the book as a savage, a wild animal, a vampire. Her beastliness is emphasized by the fact that she sometimes walks on all fours, growling. She, like Sufiya Zinobia, is hidden away in the attic,

[223] Rushdie, 225.
[224] Rushdie, 226.
[225] Rushdie, 227.
[226] Rushdie, 250.
[227] Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*, (New York: Penguin Classics, 2006): 337.

suffers from some mental illness (madness), is called and treated as a Beast. Her character may shed light on Sufiya Zinobia's agency. In their *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar note the importance of Bertha Mason to *Jane Eyre*:

> [Jane's] confrontation, not with Rochester but with Rochester's mad wife Bertha, is the book's central confrontation, an encounter…not with her own sexuality but with her own imprisoned 'hunger, rebellion, and rage,' a secret dialogue of self and soul on whose outcome…Jane's coming-of-age [depends].[228]

An important connection can be made between Jane Eyre and Sufiya Zinobia. Sexuality is part of the battle, but so is the hunger, rebellion, and rage Gilbert and Gubar describe. Where Jane finds this through her encounter with Bertha Mason, who Gilbert and Gubar call her "truest and darkest double," Sufiya Zinobia finds this in her encounter with the Beast that lives within her.[229] Sufiya Zinobia, that is, is her own truest and darkest double. While Sufiya Zinobia is not mad, she is possessed, and she, like Bertha, escapes. Says the narrator, "When it [the Beast in Sufiya Zinobia] was sure of its strength, it chose its moment, and sprang through a wall of brick." [230] Sufiya Zinobia, in her confrontation with the Beast, seeks to find her own "self and soul", as Gilbert and Gubar put it. And she knows she cannot do this within the confines of an attic.

Reflecting on Sufiya Zinobia's escape through the brick wall, Omar Khayyam "sometimes thought that Sufiya Zinobia's metamorphosis must have been willed, because even an autohypnotist cannot ask herself to do what she would be unwilling to do. So then she had chosen, she had created the Beast…"[231] This direct reference to Sufiya Zinobia's willful escape suggests that she is no longer simply a victim of the Beast; rather, she controls it. While she may have lost agency over her body when married off to Omar Khayyam and again when the Beast

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[228] Sandra M. Gilbert, and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979): 339
[229] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 339.
[230] Rushdie, 257.
[231] Rushdie, 258.

initially took her over, here Sufiya Zinobia has, to some extent, reclaimed it. True, as Ahmad explains, Sufiya Zinobia has not been cured of mental illness. This, however, does not preclude her from experiencing the shame she is burdened with and acting out against it. In fact, Sufiya Zinobia's mental illness can be read much like critics sympathetic to Bertha Mason have read her—as a metaphor for female rebellion, as the result of the relentless othering of the woman. Of course, this reading is debated. In an article on feminist disability studies, Elizabeth J. Donaldson explains that "this metaphor [of female madness as rebellion] has problematic implications."[232] Namely, it influences our perception of mental illness, the woman as hysterical, and the woman's competency. While sympathies for Bertha Mason have grown over time—particularly in light of novels written in her favor—Charlotte Bronte demonizes the madwoman in her story, locating her as the obstacle to Jane's future with Mr. Rochester. Bronte herself later regretted this portrayal, saying "profound pity ought to be the only sentiment elicited by the view of Bertha's degradation."[233]

But the narrator of Sufiya Zinobia's story, as we have seen, does not demonize her. And while we are expected to pity Sufiya Zinobia—especially at the end of the novel—this is not the only sentiment that should be elicited by the view of her. Instead, we can read Sufiya Zinobia not as a slave to her mental illness, as Bertha Mason appears to be and as Aijaz Ahmad assumes Sufiya Zinobia to be, but rather as an active participant in the destruction of a patriarchal society. Unlike Bertha, Sufiya Zinobia defies expectations. Unlike Bertha, Sufiya Zinobia inspires awe in the men around her, and her violence is a reflection of the violence she herself has been threatened by. The imagery of Sufiya Zinobia breaking through the brick wall gives us an

[232] Elizabeth J. Donaldson, "The Corpus of the Madwoman: Toward a Feminist Disability Studies Theory of Embodiment and Mental Illness," *NWSA Journal* 14, no. 3 (2002): 100.
[233] Shouhua Qi and Jacqueline Padgett, eds. *The Bronte Sisters in Other Wor(l)Ds*. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014): 198.

understanding of the strength of the agency that, until this point, she has been denied. And while she may use this agency to behave violently—as a beast would—she behaves no more violently than the men in her story. Perhaps most fascinating about Rushdie's Sufiya Zinobia is that she has been the dismissed madwoman, a beast, her whole life. Now, as the Beast, she will not be treated as one.

Holding Down the Adjoining: Sufiya Zinobia's Death and Its Implications

The novel and Sufiya Zinobia's story within it ends with Sufiya Zinobia's final encounter with her husband, Omar Khayyam Shakil. Back at the house in which Omar Khayyam grew up, Raza and Bilquìs have died at the hands of Omar Khayyam's mothers, who held a personal vendetta against the Hyder family. By the time Sufiya Zinobia reaches the house, Omar is the only one who remains, and he knows his wife is coming to seek him out. In his room, he "waited for [Sufiya Zinobia] like a bridegroom on his wedding night"—though ironically, it is the very impossibility of this scenario that leads Sufiya Zinobia toward him.[234] Although he struggles not to meet her gaze, he cannot resist, and soon "her hands, his wife's hands, reached out to him and closed."[235] When it is all said and done, the narrator explains that the girl cannot survive either.

> [Sufiya Zinobia] stood there blinking stupidly, unsteady on her feet, as if she didn't know…that on the day of reckoning the judges are not exempt from judgment, and that the power of the Beast of Shame cannot be held for long within any one frame…because it grows, it feeds and swells, until the vessel bursts. And then the explosion comes…and after it the fireball of her burning…which rises…in the shape of a giant, grey, and headless man, a figure of dreams, a phantom with one arm lifted in a gesture of farewell.[236]

In the end, the girl meets what the narrator describes as her inevitable end. Where the other "Beauty and the Beast" retellings assessed in this paper have their Beauties find some degree of

[234] Rushdie, 304.
[235] Rushdie, 304.
[236] Rushdie, 305.

happiness or liberation by the end of the tale, Rushdie's does not. Sufiya Zinobia, while able to fight within the patriarchal society to which she belongs, cannot, on her own, defeat it. Her fate, like virtually every other character mentioned in *Shame*, is death. And in her final image, we see her transformed into the headless man, still the oppressed.

Inderpal Grewal takes issue with this ending, lamenting that the tale fails to "provide a myth of liberation and struggle that would have helped present and future struggles [for female empowerment]."[237] That is, rather than have Sufiya Zinobia contribute to productive change in her society, Rushdie condemns her to violent outbursts and to death, much like Bertha Mason, who, by the end of *Jane Eyre*, commits suicide. Fawzia Afzal-Khan, on the other hand, attributes Sufiya Zinobia's fate to "the circle of opposition, the dialectic of power-powerlessness, oppression-rebellion, altogether, that is, [to] destroy the old status quo…entirely before the world can be made inhabitable for all."[238] By this interpretation, Sufiya Zinobia cannot find solace so long as the patriarchal structures that define her society are held in place. Instead, she destroys them, everything associated with them—even at the cost of her own life—so that the world can begin anew. I believe that there is validity to be found in both readings.

Could Sufiya Zinobia's story have concluded on a more redemptive note? Certainly. As Grewal points out, Pakistani women can—and have—pushed back against oppression in nonviolent, productive ways. Malala Yousafzai—the young woman who began campaigning for girls' education around the world after a Taliban gunman shot her in the head for her activism—is among the most popular of examples. Her story and the stories of many other female activists debunk the notion that the fates women suffer in *Shame* are reflective of their inability to

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[237] Inderpal Grewal, "Salman Rushdie: Marginality, Women, and Shame," *Genders*, (1988) 41.
[238] Fawzia Afzal-Khan, "Cultural Imperialism and the Indo-English Novel: Genre and Ideology in R. K. Narayan, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, and Salman Rushdie," (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press): 149.

organize and incite change. And I do not believe that Rushdie suggests otherwise. Rather, in the context of "Beauty and the Beast" tales, Sufiya Zinobia's demise attests to the dismal state of a world that systematically oppresses women—not only for these women, but for everyone. Sufiya Zinobia, shamed, married off to a shameless man, and denied agency for much of the novel commits the kind of violence that she, and other women, are constantly threatened by. Her journey is shocking, alerting readers to a story in which the female, hardly the passive victim anymore, is capable of violence and rebellion.

Unlike Beaumont's and Disney's Beauties, Sufiya Zinobia does not and cannot undergo a transformation that enables her to be all right with her role in an unjust society. And unlike Carter's Beauty, we unfortunately do not see the same degree of growth or maturation in Sufiya Zinobia's transformation; instead, her transformation is born out of desperation and rebellion. However, this transformation, in the context of the novel, has important implications. In her book, *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler writes,

> …To be a woman is… to become a woman, but because this process is in no sense fixed, it is possible to become a being whom man nor woman truly describes…it is an internal subversion in which the binary is both presupposed and proliferated to the point where it no longer makes sense.[239]

Sufiya Zinobia's transformation subverts this binary, and while it may not liberate her entirely, it does create a sort of "liberating instability" that rocks a patriarchal society to its core.[240] Ultimately, her death is a cry for change. Her struggle—along with the struggles of the novel's other women—portray women's abilities to push back in significant ways. However, these

[239] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* (New York: Routledge, 1990): 127

[240] Justyna Deszcz, "Salman Rushdie's Attempt at a Feminist Fairytale Reconfiguration in Shame," *Folklore* 115, no. 1 (2004): 39.

women still operate in a world built on their subjugation, and in this world, no one thrives. The narrator's dialogue with readers mid-story suggests this.

> I hope that it goes without saying that not all women are crushed by any system, no matter how oppressive. It is commonly and, I believe, accurately said of Pakistan that her women are much more impressive than her men… their chains, nevertheless, are no fictions. They exist. And they are getting heavier.
> *If you hold down one thing you hold down the adjoining*.
> In the end, though, it all blows up in your face.[241]

With this, it is clear that *Shame* does not involve the happily-ever-after of Beaumont's and Disney's tales. And I believe that this is exactly the point. The story asks us to consider the implications of a "Beauty and the Beast" tale in which the plot creates an image surrounding the injustice of the girl's predicament rather than aims to tame her. Where *Shame* remains consistent with the traditional tale, it emphasizes the burdens the woman is required to carry. Where the novel departs from the traditional story, it illustrates how if the woman were to destroy all those burdens, and all who imposed them, there would be nothing left. The moral of the story is no longer Beaumont's and Disney's moral of "beauty lies within" or that virtue is more important than intelligence or appearance. And in some ways, it may even go beyond Carter's message that disrupting a binary between Beast and woman can provide the woman with a degree of liberation. Rather, *Shame* shows us that the shame a woman experiences could birth a Beast—one powerful enough to wreak havoc on the world. One that cannot simply settle or attempt to make the best of an oppressed existence. One that, in tearing everything apart, reveals how already terribly broken it was.

[241] Rushdie, 181.

Conclusion: Looking Forward

In her book *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers,* Marina Warner writes:

> "Beauty and the Beast" tells, in its many diverse variations, a different story, of a bridegroom redeemed from monstrousness; the changes to this fairytale probably reveal, more clearly than in any other, the interweaving of social custom and law with fantasy narratives. It also encloses a microcosmic history of re-evaluated relations between humanity and animals and different answers to the questions, who is the beast, who is the brute?[242]

This paper dealt closely with the questions Warner poses. Who is the beast? Who is the brute? And I found my own questions out of the two: Does what it means to be a Beast differ across gendered lines? What can we make of stories that challenge our understanding of Beast *v.* woman?

The purpose of this project was to analyze constructions of the girl in three modern variants of "Beauty and the Beast." In doing so, I was able to find several common themes across retellings, noting how revisions to the traditional tale's plotline resulted in different messages regarding the girl. Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, Carter's *The Tiger's Bride*, and Rushdie's *Shame* each approached the notion of Beauty *as* the Beast to different degrees, with Disney portraying the least transformative experience (the Beast is, in effect, stomped out of the woman) and Rushdie portraying the most transformative (there is hardly a girl left in the Beast by story's end.)

Beginning with Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, the importance of analyzing female transformation was illustrated. While Belle is likely to be perceived as admirable from a feminist lens focusing exclusively on gender role stereotypes, her transformation through the story—or

[242] Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde*, xvi.

lack thereof—is reflective of the limited agency she is granted to take control of her life and to prioritize her own dreams. Instead, she is threatened with violence and is expected to overcome overwhelming adversity. Ultimately, Disney was and continues to be rewarded with applause for transforming a brilliant young woman, determined and capable, into a nurturing wife-to-be. Almost thirty years later, little changed in Disney's live action remake, emphasizing an unfortunately limited conception of what it means to empower women. Angela Carter's *The Tiger's Bride*, on the other hand, breaks from fairy tale tradition in its representation of the female voice. Carter's Beauty, appalled that her body has been commoditized in an exchange with the Beast, finds ultimately that her new life is preferable to the one she previously belonged to. For the first time, she is in control. In the face of a Beast, she is permitted to release her own beastliness, breaking down a binary between Beast and woman that has often prevented women from being seen as more than the "delicate girl" Mike Pence described in his op-ed. In Salman Rushdie's *Shame*, complex questions of agency and representation are posed with regard to the girl's full transformation into Beast. Again, female sexuality is described, and here, the capacity for women to commit violence is looked upon favorably. However, the trope of the "madwoman in the attic" sparks debate that essentially boils down to the question: Must the female be incited to violence? In Rushdie's story, it seems more a matter of what this unusual violence says about the girl's treatment. Ultimately, we are left with the shocking and disturbing fate of a world that oppresses women.

Taken together, these texts provide us with valuable insights into who the girl is. Disney shows us exactly what the virtuous woman looks like. Sure, Belle can read and roll her eyes at men—the movie was written for a late-twentieth century American audience, after all—but ultimately she is required to find happiness as the Beast's wife in nearly the same provincial life

that so bored her. Meanwhile, Carter asks us to recognize that perhaps a Beast does exist inside the woman and perhaps we have only been socialized to believe that this is something evil or dangerous. In striking a balance between Beast and woman, Carter's Beauty complicates these terms to show that the Beast is in many ways human and the woman has in many ways suppressed a Beast that could liberate her. Where Carter leaves us on a hopeful note, showing what good could happen if the Beast is awakened inside the woman, Rushdie's ending is fairly pessimistic. In his story, the Beast is all consuming, murderous, and bent on revenge—the kind of Beast all too often associated with women. Here, Rushdie, like Carter, treats the Beast as something suppressed within women. However, his portrayal is more a representation of the horror that would befall our world if women enacted the kinds of violence that men threaten them with. Perhaps if a woman could be driven to the kind of violence she experiences, attention would finally be drawn to her. Of course, this violence could never be redemptive regardless, as a woman, even when granted individual power, must fight against the patriarchal systems that oppress her. But still, we would take notice.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this analysis primarily relate to the kinds of revisions that must be made to fairy tales if we are to understand how women are portrayed through texts and if we are to portray them more completely. We must build upon the work of sex-role theorists and focus on women's stories: when they have control, how they transform, and where they end up. What's more, this analysis demonstrates how important a critical reading of fairy tales can be for understanding the subtle ways in which images of the woman may influence us. Such critical readings are necessary if we are to reclaim the fairy tale as a feminist tool and to cultivate its power into creating more just societies, as Jack Zipes puts it. The promise of these just societies is at the heart of this work. Common themes across the variants I studied—

threats of violence, the female voice, restricted agency—all bear an eerie relevance to a 22-year old college student in the United States today. And, quite frankly, to women of all ages everywhere. In a world newly invigorated by the goals that drive #MeToo and Time's Up, we must turn to where we have failed to provide necessary education in the past. We must seek to understand how it comes to pass that our most powerful leaders devalue the female, that our justice systems dehumanize her as she asks for help. What if we didn't need to re-socialize adults on how to view the woman? What if we started from the roots? We would, I am convinced, find ourselves better off.

The oral folk tale used to be a means for common people to gather around narratives that portrayed utopia—happily-ever-afters. But often these these happily-ever-afters disadvantage their titular characters. Women begin to define their happiness by what it is "supposed" to look like according to these tales, and in some cases, they internalize violence toward them as normal and acceptable. They begin to think of themselves as they see themselves constructed, formulating explanations for their actions based on two-dimensional experiences of beautiful princesses they look up to. Popular media attempts to compensate for this. It tackles the biggest and most obvious issues, transforming female passivity into activity. And curiously, this often seems to be enough for us. Our complaint so often manifests itself as *make her* do *something, anything active* rather than *give her options, change the ending entirely*. Because, for many, fairy tales have been special. They were among our first encounters with literature. They introduced us to the fantastic. It can be difficult to alter drastically something so wrapped in nostalgia—even if we realize how problematic it is. Sometimes, however, those drastic changes aren't necessary. Sometimes, they need not be massive to go deep and seek out solutions. As this paper has shown, a few revisions can preserve the essence of a text while communicating a message that instills

confidence in its audience. Moving forward, we must take subtext into consideration where we have previously neglected to do so.

Returning to "Beauty and the Beast," we find, on its darker side, the story of a girl whose worth is valued at less than her father's. She is thrust into a world of beasts and asked to fend for herself. Only when she accepts her fate, when she learns not only to be okay with it, but also to love it, can she be free.

The variants I studied attempted, to varying degrees and with varying success, to challenge this. Because we simply cannot allow Beauty's story to be the story we push forth for young women. Already, girls find their bodies at risk. Already, they are asked to fend for themselves. Another generation of girls will come into this world, and what are the chances they will clutch their pepper spray bottles tight to their bodies, find shame where desire once was, have their dreams invalidated, be asked to prove trauma that can't be seen?

Time will tell. For now, their fairy tale utopias, the happily-ever-afters they read about and see in the movies, should reflect something greater. They should tell us that what girls can hope for in their real-world lives is so much more than what they will be asked, even if in small part, to simply accept.

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